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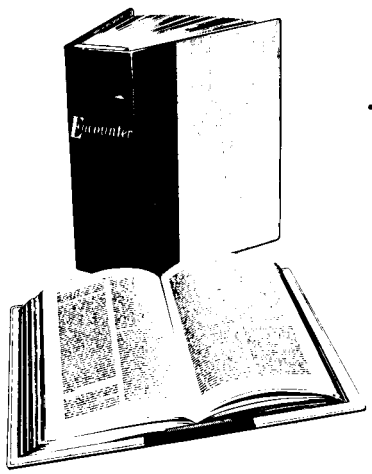

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Elizabeth Baines

Standard Deviation

ONCE, A TRAINLOAD OF PEOPLE fell off a crashing bridge into the river, and were gone. Just like that. Took off from the land into the high night, and were never seen again. A million to one chance of such a thing happening, and it happened. Ninety years later, the stumps of that bridge jut from the water, following the curve of the later bridge, barnacled shadows. People are used to them. People don't think of them, getting on with their lives. It's the way things are.

In these late 1960s, Meryl's getting on with her life down on the west side of the city now, where the river narrows and its banks are reined in parkland. In a grey sandstone house with neo-Gothic turrets, and half an acre of garden with tussocks and daffodils (but no trees), she gets on with it quietly, sighing now and then, the way she's always been sighing. Sighing, with Meryl, has no special significance, it's just something she's given to. She bends to pick something up, and she sighs when she straightens; she stands a while musing, and then sighs when she rouses herself: just a habit, or the predictable result of the peculiarly diminutive construction of her rib-cage, as her first husband, the cardiac physician, used jokingly to say.

Her second husband, the bone specialist, isn't used to the sighing.

"Are you chilly, dear?" he asks in the darkening shadows of the beige-and-blue drawing-room. It's an evening in spring. It's the time of the year when the students get their heads down and when the buds on the trees in this city are still trying to squeeze themselves out, and the lengthening evenings are blue with cold.

The gas fire coughs, and the next sigh she makes might be one of satisfaction. She gazes out through the uncurtained window to where daffodils gleam like low-wattage light-bulbs, and lets her mind wander to other spring evenings in another darkened drawing-room, away on the east side where professional dwellings give way to the jute-mills.

She says to her husband: "I'm a little worried about those students in the house."

He touches her head. "Are you worried about the students, or are you worried about the house?"

She blushes with shame. She's always blushed, too. At fifty Meryl still blushes with shame. "They mess it up."

He laughs indulgently, a good and distinguished man, with the kind of looks you could almost call handsome. "How do you know?"

How can she tell him the way that she knows?

Silence spreads across the room like an ink-stain.

NOW THE DARKNESS seeps from the walls of the jute-mills along the wide street where professional houses loom in gaunt spaces. Two local women on their way back from evening-class see a light go on in a deep bay-window.

"Those students never pull the curtains", remarks one. "They've got no shame."

They watch, between the bars of trees, a girl in jeans yawn like a lioness.

"I'M TIRED", says the girl in jeans. "I'm tired of this Scottish spring." Remembering other springs in southern England: "Is it always this cold? Is everything usually this far behind?"

"Generally", answers the boy in the room.

It's the time of the year for taking the general view, for playing safe with summary, for not being side-tracked into particulars.

"Yes", answers Barry, "a cold spring in

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Scotland is the general rule."

Before it's dark in the evenings, Jane sits in her jeans at the front-bedroom window, level with the tree-tops and thousands of leaf-buds like steely ball-bearings that bob with the branches, never bursting, never swelling. It's a static spring.

IT'S A HOUSE WITH TREES, that house up by the jute-mills, where Meryl once lived with her first (deceased) husband, a heart specialist, quite renowned, energetic and strong-minded, with looks no one could deny were exceedingly handsome. There isn't a big garden there, going by square-yardage, but it's huge in its way, with a rushing height of trees.

Meryl's second husband thinks the trees a big mistake there. He says: "They'll ruin the foundations, they're sycamores, they're forest trees." Well, Meryl believes him.

Meryl's first husband didn't mind about the trees. They grew overnight, it seemed, or while he was away, energetically dashing off to cardiac emergencies, and there they were, all at once, screening the road and making shifting green filters for the light in the drawing-room. "Oh, they're all right", said her first husband, "they won't harm", dashing off again to yet another emergency. She didn't doubt it. Well, she felt it would be silly to moon around doubting it.

At night in the east house they went to bed often with the sound of branches tangling, and woke on sunny mornings to mangled shadows on the curtains.

Getting into bed now in the silent house on the genteel west side, Meryl says to the bone specialist: "Do you know those students sleep together?"

"What, the whole crowd of them?" He laughs down the front of the pyjamas he is buttoning.

She says, cringing to hear herself saying it primly: "There are only three. Two of them sleep together. The boy and one of the girls."

It's the end of the Sixties. In the mid-Sixties Meryl was living on the east side, and then her husband went and died. And times got hard, and it seemed there was nothing but she'd have to sell up, when along came the bone man and married her and saved her. And now she lets the house to students. They live irregular lives in it. And hold irregular views in it. That's hard to take. Also, she's ashamed of finding it hard to take. She feels that nowadays somehow one oughtn't to.

"Anyway", asks her husband, fondly out to catch her out, "how do you know ?"

"NIGHT-NIGHT", calls Adrienne to Jane and Barry in the house up by the jute-mills. She's standing in the doorway in an ankle-length white nightie. The curtains are still open.

Adrienne in bright mini-skirts and wild gypsy ear-rings tosses her hair as she swings past builders' scaffolding, and all the hard-hats whistle. At the bus-stop she pivots, changing her weight from one foot to the other, sensing soft covert leers. But her nightie's the nightie she wore in the convent, and she goes to bed early and before she gets in she says her prayers. She prays to be guided in all her decisions and also to be protected from excesses. She trusts that she will be. She trusts that she is. She falls asleep with a myriad of paper patterns and wedding-dress designs dancing round in her head.

After the exams she's going home to get married to her boyfriend in Montrose. Since God has guided her in this decision, she trusts to him that the marriage will be happy, and also about the sex. Adrienne's a virgin, or almost as good as one. The good thing about marriage, thinks Adrienne thankfully, is that at last you don't have to feel guilty about sex. Also it doesn't matter if you're pregnant when you're married.

An owl hoots in the trees. It's the beginning of May, two weeks before exams.

At least for Adrienne there's a sense of something happening. Jane feels bogged down, by the weather, and by Statistics. She gnashes her pencil where landlady Meryl once powdered her nose. She jumps as something crashes in the trees. She peers, and sees two brick-coloured birds, top-heavy as turkeys, swaying and wobbling, and saving themselves with a smashing of wings. They stare back at her, through her, with neurotic pebble-eyes.

"Concentrate", says Barry, who's at her shoulder explaining the Statistics. "Put your mind to it, and then you'll understand."

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She's got no appetite to pick the dry bones of it. Her gaze wanders out again. The birds carry twigs. She looks down, between the tree-trunks. And then she sees a figure, a man standing still and hunched beneath the trees.

Who is he? Should they let him know they have seen him, to make him go away? No, there's something about him. Or is it something about the garden, so close yet so alien, with its tumbling perspective? And not their own. So that the presence of a stranger isn't theirs to account for.

A little while later, when they look again, he's gone.

That night, for once, they feel an urge to draw the curtains. Though they don't.

DOWN ON THE WEST SIDE they always draw the curtains. The doctor pulls the swish-cord and a rustle shuts the night out.

"Where did you go today?" he asks his wife. "I see you had your car out."

"Oh, just out and about", she says. "Just around." Shifting and sighing.

The doctor is a caring and conscientious man. He thinks maybe his wife has too little to do. He frowns, wondering what can be found perhaps to occupy her.

EARLY IN THE MORNING, before anybody's up in the student house, the sun streams in through the undrawn curtains and throws the shadows of branches, like Chinese puzzle-patterns.

At breakfast Adrienne asks, "What's that noise?"

Nobody answers. They're engrossed in discussion of Standard Deviation.

Explains Barry: "The Standard Deviation is the average amount that your values in a sample differ from its arithmetic mean."

The idea of anything being both standard and yet a deviation causes Jane to pout and poke crumbs about. The average amount that things differ from the average—it's tautology, it's paradox, a load of verbal trickery.

"There *is* a noise!" says Adrienne.

And now they all listen. There's a faint tick-ticking. Adrienne goes to the window and looks up into the branches. No pigeons there.

The sun shines through her hair. She leans further, and through the side-pane she sees the source of the clicking. There's a gardener with a spade, turning the soil rhythmically. How lovely, she thinks. That seems hopeful, and right. Right for spring, and for a time in one's life for setting things in order. Someone here to tend the garden. She breathes deeply with pleasure. And then he lifts his head and her bright colours catch his eye.

At the table, Jane is finding it hard in any case to accept the concept of average. How could you ever be sure of an *average*?

With heavy patience Barry explains: "You can be sure within a *sample*. We are talking in the context of a *known sample*. Within a *known sample population* there's no problem in calculating the way things are."

The gardener in the garden drops his spade to stare at Adrienne.

IN THE BEIGE-AND-BLUE drawing-room Meryl tells her husband she's instructed the gardener to go to the east house odd mornings and afternoons. She's shown him the tool-shed, and she's getting him pruning, and digging round the trees where in the autumn she might get him to put daffodils. She hopes her husband doesn't mind. No, of course not, he's glad, it's good to think of her occupied and interested. He lays his hand on her head. Yes, from that viewpoint, he's glad. Though as for that garden, he can't see why she bothers.

"I DON'T THINK he's normal, do you, that gardener?" says Adrienne with her mouth full. "He's got funny eyes. And he doesn't speak, either, he just moves his hands and stares."

Says Jane: "It's the way he turns up, and we don't know he's coming. Though there's no reason he shouldn't. But it makes me feel odd."

"Yes, he's odd, but pretty harmless", is Adrienne's decision.

Outside in the trees there's a cascade of twigs as the pigeons try to build a nest in the open leafless branches. They clonk about on the ground, retrieving their lost bits, and start again.

"I think he likes you", says Jane. "It's you

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he's always staring at."

Adrienne spits out bread-bits. She giggles, and snorts, and pivots in the window.

IT'S SUNDAY NOW, and ten days to the exams. Adrienne's praying for all the right questions. What, without her Diploma for a respectable profession, will a bright girl do? Well, careers aren't everything. Trust and affection are the things to build a life on. And Adrienne's getting married in the summer.

Not like Jane, who doesn't know. Doesn't know about her future. Doesn't know about Statistics. Doesn't often know what she thinks, and when she does, thinks negatively.

Jane, up in her bedroom, worrying the corners of *Statistics Made Easy*, sees with a shock there's a man in the dusk, standing by the trees again.

Could it be the gardener? Or is it someone else?

"I'M NOT CONVINCED about sample populations. There's something about them makes me uneasy."

Barry sighs. "I don't understand what it is you don't understand."

"Accept."

"I don't understand what it is you don't accept."

"A sample population. As a representation of the total population."

"Ah. Well. We allow for discrepancy. We use this formula to calculate a sample's probable accuracy in representing the total population."

"Ah, the magic formula! The laying-on of hands!"

Back from Mass, Adrienne wants to know who's been rifling through her cupboards.

"Not me", they both reply. That makes her mad. It's a time for thinking positive, but you can't help some irritation, and some measure of suspicion, so close to the exams, in such a static spring, and what with sexual frustration.

There's a knock at the door. When Adrienne answers, the gardener is there with an armful of daffodils. His marble eyes slew together. He moves the daffodils towards her, pushes them at her so she's forced to accept them, and then makes a choking noise, and turns and flees.

Jane comes to see what's happening.

"He brought me flowers", Adrienne giggles.

The gardener has vanished. Perhaps the air's a little warmer. There's a greasy smear of greenery along the lower branches. An oily cooing bubbles in the air. The pigeons have at last constructed a nest, a loose holey platform, exposed to view.

"Not much of a chance of that holding", says Barry at the bedroom window. Already, when the birds alight, bits break away and scatter.

"How much chance of a contraceptive sheath being faulty with holes in?" It's a thought that every time makes Jane a little nervous.

"Oh, a million to one."

She doesn't believe him.

ADRIENNE PRAYS for protection from excesses, kneeling in her nightie in a room jam-packed with daffodils.

"Where on earth does he get them?" Jane has wanted to know.

"From the loony-bin grounds?" Adrienne decides to go out and sunbathe in the cool sunshine. She settles in a sun-patch and lifts her skirt a little. The gardener stops and stares softly. Well, she likes getting daffodils.

It's a time when you feel that things are in the balance. It's a time for making choices.

"We could get married", says Barry.

Barry says for a man sex is better without sheaths. Jane thinks she probably feels the same. She'd like it better without the worry and without all the palaver.

It's the late 1960s. GPs like Jane's don't prescribe the pill for girls who aren't married. It's the general rule.

If Jane married Barry she could go on the pill.

"I don't know", says Jane, "I'll have to see."

Outside in the garden the pigeons' nest collapses and scatters on the ground.

IN THE HOUSE on the west side they like jokingly to say they are safely past the menopause and sexual obsession. It's a quiet thoughtful

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time, the time for going to bed. The doctor goes to draw the bedroom curtains.

He says, remembering his view of the garden before it got dark: "I knew there was something! What's happened to all the daffodils?"

"What, dear?" Meryl blushes quickly.

She hasn't been listening. She's been thinking how her heart turned over when she saw the man like a shadow in the dusk beneath the trees.

"HOW MANY TIMES will pigeons build a nest before they learn to do it properly? How many failures will make them give up?"

"From this single pair we cannot know about the species. Our sample is too small to make reliable comment on the total population. We may only describe the pigeons we have. We may not comment on likelihood."

To Jane, any comment on likelihood, whatever your sample, is cooking the books, and somehow depressing.

The nest is rebuilt. The trees are coming into leaf. They make a netted curtain in front of the roadway, and screen the view of the jute-mills.

"We could be in the country!" says Adrienne. "We can believe that we are!"

The daffodils are at an end. Today the gardener has empty arms. He lifts them, dumbly, and extends them to touch her. His fingers brush her shoulders. His empty face opens, but emits no sound. His fingers move and caress her.

She breaks away roughly.

"YOU KNOW", says Jane, "I think someone's been poking around in my room. Certain things have been moved, and there's one or two I can't account for."

"Perhaps it's the gardener", says Adrienne, and shudders.

"That's not very likely. He wouldn't get in."

"You'd be surprised at what's likely", says Adrienne, blushing.

NOW LECTURES HAVE finished. It's two days to the exams. The girls stay at home, quietly working in their rooms. The pigeons coo, hidden. Downstairs a key clicks in a Yale lock. The girls turn their pages. And then beyond Jane's bedroom door there's a drawn-out sigh.

"There's something really weird in that", says Adrienne, "a woman like that snooping round other folks' bedrooms. It's downright perverted, you'd never expect it."

She thinks it's a madhouse, she'll be glad when she's left it, and back home (and married).

In the garden a pigeon's egg falls through a hole in the nest and smashes on the ground.

JANE WALKS by the Tay. It's the day before exams. Up in the Infirmary the consultant bone specialist, a conscientious clinician, prescribes a pain-killing drug, empirically tested and proven successful in a statistically significant number of cases, and predicts the rapid recovery of one of his patients. Meryl sits on the west side and stirs her tea, and feels ashamed. Machines rattle in the jute-mills.

In a population of jute workers there is practically 100% high-frequency deafness by the age of fifty. That's only a description of the way things are, so far. You can't predict, or be sure of your variables. Tomorrow they might take to wearing ear-plugs without telling you.

Perhaps Jane will marry Barry, and get carefree sex forever. The river is grey. The tide will rise round the bridge-stumps, and fall again, predictably. If, in 1878, people had known more about the construction of bridges, they could have predicted and avoided a disaster. But all the variables were not accounted for. The chances seemed like a million to one.

The wind blows across the water, predictably steely in a Scottish spring.

But in other places there are other springs. In other worlds there are other possibilities. And what if present worlds should change? Sun-spots, and sudden slight tilts in the whole world's axis?

It is the late 1960s.

Fairly handsome men marry widows and save them.

Virgins marry.

Lovers marry.

It's the way things are.

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The Life & Death of Arthur Koestler

A Writer's Greatness

By Raymond Aron

Paris

WITH Arthur Koestler's passing we have lost one of the last and greatest of those *intellectuels engagés* who, born in the early years of the century (and so too young to take part in the First World War), were tossed about in the turbulent 1920s and '30s, alternately enchanted and disenchanted by secular religions in search of the absolute.

Neither André Malraux nor Jean-Paul Sartre had to change countries and languages. Koestler, typically of the Central-European Jewish intelligentsia, changed languages twice: from Hungarian to German and from German to English. He lived his last thirty years as a British citizen in the quiet of his London home, outside the world of politics to which he had contributed so much; he had sworn abruptly to have nothing more to do with it—except through his writing. *Journaliste de grand style*, he shut himself off from the din around him and returned to his earliest allegiances. As a very young man he had occupied an important post with the Berlin publishers Ullstein, as an observer, commentator, interpreter, and populariser of matters scientific; he was sacked because of his underground activities as a Communist. After saying goodbye to politics he published works on the fringes of various disciplines, exploring some of the outposts of knowledge. The French reading public never paid the same homage to those great books, *The Sleepwalkers* and *The Act of Creation*, as the British and Americans did.

Unlike André Malraux, whose culture drew upon literature and history—unlike Jean-Paul Sartre, the metaphysician-turned-novelist who judged disputes between parties and nations on moralistic grounds (occasionally so inverted as to find arguments and excuses for Stalin)—this Hungarian *émigré* in the Berlin of the Weimar Republic, or in a Vienna stripped of its empire, devoted most of his time to the study of science. Malraux sought inspiration in art when events no longer supplied him with material for his novels; Koestler found not so much a refuge as an inexhaustible mine of knowledge and ideas in science. In science he was something more than an enthusiastic layman, something other than a learned academic exchanging the laboratory for the lecture-room. Possibly his search, in terms of its origin and finality, was a philosophical one; it had as its object that curious animal "Man", that evolutionary semi-failure torn between his primeval brain and his neo-cortex, a latecomer in the history of his species. Koestler analysed or explained the duality of our nature—half animal, half intelligence—in the light of neurological hypotheses drawn from the theory of evolution. They were hypotheses that scientists took seriously.

RUBASHOV, the hero of *Darkness at Noon*, carries an ambiguity within him, possibly the same one, at any rate a member of the same family. To the French, Koestler remains primarily the author of the book that more than any other showed them the essence of the Stalinist régime and of the

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Moscow Trials. *Darkness at Noon* was a success the world over; it was translated into thirty-three languages and brought the young journalist and essayist a fame that lasted for more than forty years and outlived some twenty subsequent works of a quite different kind.

Like the novels of Malraux (though closer to historical reality), *Darkness at Noon* (*Le Zéro et L'Infini*) did not reveal any facts that Westerners could not have known before—but how many accepted that they knew them? The *Memoirs* of Victor Serge and Boris Souvarine's *Stalin* had come up against a barrier of indifference or scepticism. Koestler broke through that barrier thanks to his literary powers and thanks to the way in which he chose to tell his story. He could have put forward yet another theory of the Trials and of the Confessions: Why did those old revolutionaries, comrades of Lenin, confess to crimes they had not committed? Rather, he chose to make his readers share the long Bolshevik ordeal of Russian mental torture. At the end of it Rubashov finds in his Leninist faith (*the Party is always right; outside the Party I cease to exist*) reasons for falling in with the sordid comedy of the tribunal and facing death calmly, more or less convinced that he is making one last contribution to the cause to which he had dedicated his life.

Other witnesses—Alex Weissberg, for instance, in *The Accused*—gave a more rigorous description of the interrogations and of the successive stages of the procedures employed during the great purge. Khrushchev over-simplified the pseudo-mystery of the confessions (but not unreasonably) when he asked why the defendants, unless they had been tortured, lied in order to do themselves down. But it was Koestler who struck home, who touched millions upon millions throughout the world, and who, long before Solzhenitsyn, helped the perplexed reader to comprehend the incomprehensible, namely the perverse logic of those chain identifications (the dissident weakens the Party . . . *ergo* he is a traitor . . . *ergo* he is an agent of the *Gestapo*) that are the essence, the diabolical and fascinating essence of an absolute historical faith.

Koestler told me himself that, paradoxically enough, *Darkness at Noon* prompted a few conversions to Communism—though very few in comparison with the conversions the other way. The French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty took Koestler's novel as the occasion for and subject of his famous essay *Humanisme et Terreur*, and it launched a major French debate. Koestler had little taste for philosophical hairsplitting, however subtle. He admitted to me on several occasions, "I never managed to get to the end of that particular book." Merleau-Ponty accused Koestler of being *un mauvais marxiste*. He may have been right on that score (I still have doubts), but the characters in the novel did undoubtedly profess the "bad Marxism" denounced by the philosopher, who was more familiar with Frenchmen who talked phenomenology than with Russians who were Marxist-Leninists.

None of his other books achieved so complete and universal a success. Yet André Malraux admired *Spanish Testament*, Koestler's account of

The Light-Bringer

"If power corrupts, the reverse is also true. Persecution corrupts the victim, though perhaps in subtler and more tragic ways. . . ."

ARTHUR KOESTLER, *whose shockingly unexpected suicide we have just heard about, wrote many books, and they were brought out in a collection called "The Danube Edition."*

The Danube was his river, and if to most of us it means whipped cream and Johann Strauss, to Koestler it symbolised the struggle. He was an intellectual and a ferocious one, not a mere university don playing games. He was never afraid of going out to find experience. His works were not dreamed up in the library, they were forged out of the bitter contentious world he lived in.

WHEN he became a British citizen, he bestowed a gift on English literature—the truth about European politics from the inside, presented with a horse's mouth authenticity that no one would dream of questioning. Koestler used his third language with the grace and confidence of a Conrad.

He was a tough man. His leisure pursuits were either intellectually tough—like chess—or physically tough—like mountaineering. He was tough about good wine, which he loved.

He loved his adopted country too, but he never quite understood the British working man. He believed there was what he called a tragic barrier between the progressive intellectual and the working class. Only a European would talk about a progressive intellectual at all.

KOESTLER *did not sufficiently appreciate how much the British achieved their destiny by unthinking instinct. He wanted the British to think more, but nothing on earth will make the British think.*

I remember his telling me once about the end of the War in London. The black-out was relaxed, and Koestler was the first man in his neighbourhood to switch on and let his light flood out into the dark streets.

A little girl of seven, brought up to think of light-spilling as a sin, sobbed bitterly, "Uncle Arthur doesn't believe in God."

Uncle Arthur didn't, but he believed, rather hopelessly, in man. He was a genuine light-bringer.

Anthony Burgess
in the *Daily Mail* (London)

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his experience as a condemned man in Franco's gaols, saved at the eleventh hour by the intervention of the British government. The two autobiographical volumes, *Arrow in the Blue* and *The Invisible Writing*, tell the exciting and often moving story of a child of our century, torn from his roots, coming to grips with his time. *Darkness at Noon* is probably his most complete success, but we fail to do him justice if we reduce his life's work to a single historic novel that a gifted writer had it in him to write, sooner or later.

I do not know his scientific books well enough nor am I sufficiently competent in such matters to pass judgment on this part of his life's work. Here, too, his militant temperament was apparent. He was a passionate opponent of "reductionism", the tendency on the part of certain scientists to fail to appreciate the different levels of reality, to reduce all living contexts to the simplest material, to physico-chemical schemes. In his youth he had a passion for physics; from the 1950s onwards his passion was biology. Could it be that he was really willing to shut himself up in one narrow domain of science? Or was it that he was aspiring to a kind of *encyclopédisme* in an age when the exponential growth of available knowledge would appear to exclude such an ambition? I do not know how these invariably intelligent, invariably stimulating works will age.

WHAT OUGHT at all events to be etched on our memories is the itinerary that took a young Jew, alone and penniless in the world at the age of eighteen, from the grey pavements of Vienna to a green Knightsbridge square by way of a *kibbutz*, the Communist Party, a sojourn in the Soviet Union, a spell in Franco's prisons and a French concentration camp (*Scum of the Earth*). He became totally committed to the Communist cause. When he discovered the truth he became as passionately committed to resistance to totalitarianism (and not just Stalinism).

I came to know him in the post-War years when France was, *par excellence*, the battlefield on which the Cold War was fought, the war of ideologies and intellectuals. He took part in the *Congrès pour la liberté de la culture* and sympathised with the *Rassemblement du peuple français* (and here lay the cause of his dramatic break with Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir). He was not always particularly indulgent towards his fellow men and women; imbued with *freudisme*, he tended to read people like an analyst. But in my experience he was invariably a loyal comrade-in-arms and a cordial friend.

Life was never easy for him, even when economic and political difficulties were a thing of

Unpublished "Jottings"

He who cannot hate cannot love.

★

People condemned me as heartless for leaving one wife or mistress after another. In fact I had such a low opinion of myself that I never believed any woman really loved me. Thus when I parted from D, or L, or F, I was not aware of the pain I inflicted on them.

★

At 70, he decreed a general amnesty for his past sins. But apparently the subconscious was never informed.

★

Re [_ _]p. He is not even a genuine phoney. The most exasperating fact about our enemies is that they have some positive, or attractive qualities.

★

The only serious problem left in old age is old age.

★

He did his best and knew it was not good enough.

★

I am such a hypochondriac that I sometimes believe even my hypochondria to be imaginary.

★

I feel so sorry for C being sorry for me that I forget to be sorry for myself.

★

My past has risen against me, swinging a cudgel.

★

Thou shalt not carry moderation to extremes.

From a handwritten notebook entitled "JOTTINGS" found on Koestler's desk, dated 1978–83

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the past. Still, to the very end he matched "theory and *praxis*", his actions with his beliefs. With Albert Camus he launched the successful European campaign against the death penalty. As a vice-president of EXIT he demanded the freedom to choose one's death in dignity: and he took his own life, when illness had begun to ravage his body.

An American Appreciation

Cold Warrior

By Sidney Hook

New York City

IF *Darkness at Noon* were the only thing Arthur Koestler had written he would still have been one of the great figures of our time. His book served as a compelling text in political education. It achieved, gradually and in the face of inner resistance, what all the arguments and evidence we marshalled to prove the falsity of the Moscow Trials failed to do.

Those of us who helped organise the Dewey Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials were too sanguine about the effects of the pronouncement of the Dewey Commission on public consciousness even in the United States. The massive volume *Not Guilty!* in which the Commission declared its verdict, buttressed by the supporting analysis, made little impact. Despite its existence the Hollywood moguls dared to produce a motion picture, *Mission to Moscow*, based upon the memoirs of the ignorant and empty-headed US ambassador to the Soviet Union, Joseph Davies, in which he declared that the Moscow Trials defendants (and tens of thousands of other victims of Stalin's purges) had all been Hitler's "fifth-columnists' in the Soviet Union. In the light of this cinematographic triumph, abetted by influential fellow-travellers and Soviet apologists, who transformed the Kremlin's involuntary co-belligerency into an alliance of democratic freedom-loving peoples, pettifogging details about contradictory avowals at the Moscow Trials could be brushed aside, and the complete absence of documentary and other material evidence ignored.

So far as I have been able to observe, only Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* was able to convey the sickening truth, overcoming by its psychological plausibility the initial doubts and resistance of Communist sympathisers. In some intellectual circles, paradoxically enough, Koestler was hated all the more for it. This was particularly true in France. In 1948 and 1949 I found the French intellectuals, particularly those under the influence of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, singularly indifferent to the evidence about the Moscow Trials. They simply refused to discuss it. But they hated and defamed Koestler whose book had just been translated into French. For it drove them from denial of the fact that the defendants had confessed to non-existent crimes, to justifications and apologetic rationalisations for systematic lies on behalf of the deeper necessary truths of the Soviet Communist cause. The literal fact that Bukharin had been tortured into portraying himself as an enemy of the Revolution he had helped into birth paled before the "symbolic truth" that his differences with Stalin had imperilled the Soviet Union. A similar development took place with respect to the existence of Soviet concentration camps.

Koestler was hated because he made the horde of Communist fellow-travellers begin to choke on the official Soviet lies. Those who finally managed to swallow the lies at the cost of a permanent queasiness were convulsed by nausea when Khrushchev delivered his shattering speech in 1956 before the XXth Congress of the Russian Communist Party. They never forgave Koestler.

Koestler seemed to arouse a greater antagonism among non-Communists, particularly Oxbridge intellectuals, than almost all other former Communists. I was always struck by the difference in attitude they displayed towards Ignazio Silone even when Silone and Koestler were engaged in common political activities. Koestler had endured as much, if not more, than Silone in the struggle against Fascism. And it was Silone who had said, I believe even before Koestler, that the "final struggle would be between Communists and ex-Communists." The kernel of truth in this remark was that the ex-Communists knew the face and mind of the enemy much better than the liberal or conservative or reactionary opponents of communism. The latter not only failed to understand a politics based on a *Weltanschauung* but what slogans like "Peaceful Coexistence" and "*détente*" actually mean to the Kremlin. Someone who took seriously Leninist strategy for

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"exploiting contradictions", say an "ex-Communist" in the British entourage sent to Yugoslavia (instead of James Klugman and his friends), would never have connived with Tito to help bring his country into the Kremlin's orbit; an "ex-Communist" at Roosevelt's side, having paid some attention to the history of Bolshevism, might have taught him at Yalta and Teheran that in dealing with Stalin he was not facing another Tammany boss like Jim Farley; an "ex-Communist", sensitised to Kremlin and Comintern deviousness, would have prevented Truman from coming home from Potsdam with a sector of Berlin which had no guaranteed corridor of access. . . .

None the less Silone enjoyed a political esteem denied to Koestler. This was partly due to Silone's detached and gentle manner, his air of an unbelieving Christian. Koestler was a completely engaged and passionate partisan who wanted to carry the war for freedom to the enemy, not by arms, but by debate and confrontation in the hope (despite his declared views about the irrational) that argument and evidence would weaken, if it did not win back, the allegiance of those supporters of the Communist line who still could be moved by Western ideals and achievements, and who were not yet seduced by Soviet power or blinded by anti-American resentment.

There was, however, a deeper reason. Silone remained a Socialist, and most other former Communists became Social-Democrats. But Koestler was cured of all Socialist illusions by his bitter experience with the Communist movement. The very idea of socialism in whatever benign form became suspect to him. He did not make a fetish of the free-enterprise system as did Max Eastman, nor did he develop the Dostoevskian Christianity of Whittaker Chambers, although he appreciated the despair and agony which led Chambers to that outlook.[1] He did not want to counterpose any other social system or scheme to communism lest in the struggle some of the unlovely traits of the enemy would develop among its protagonists. He was content to invoke truth, decency, hatred of cruelty and hypocrisy in the crusade against communism. He summarily rejected not only God and capitalism but all varieties of democratic socialism. This was a strange view for a man as politically sophisticated as Koestler. It left him an embattled moral warrior. Realising that concrete political programmes and conflicts sooner or later led to compromises with truth, and the deceits and hypocrisies of virtue, he finally abandoned the field of politics altogether. The failure to see the simple, passionate morality in Koestler's political judgments led many who should have admired him to distrust him, and to misunderstand the real grounds of his anti-communism.

KOESTLER SOMETIMES made it difficult for others to see this. I recall that the first time we met in New York shortly before an important Italian election in which he feared the effects of a Communist Party victory on the political future of Europe, he lost his temper with me because I insisted upon talking about the economic situation in Southern Italy, and the necessity of Italian social reconstruction. He scornfully compared my concern with that of the English Labourites who had urged the reconstruction of the London slums as "the most effective way of stopping Hitler." First the Italian Communists had to be stopped at all costs; and then we would see. . . . Our positions didn't really differ, as he subsequently admitted in a handsome note of apology—which he often wrote after his emotional outbursts. He was always fearful that some other grand social illusion would get in the way of combating the greater evil.

TO OUR GREAT LOSS Koestler withdrew from active political life, and even from writing the political journalism in which his genius came to full flower. The ostensible reason was the political stupidity of the West, especially the United States and its stolid failure to "take the offensive for freedom." But the real reason, I suspect, was his realisation that he would have to compromise at some point or another his fierce moral indignation as soon as the struggle involved more than his pen. He was right in recognising that there is always a risk of becoming somewhat "like those we fight against" in the stratagems and deceits of political struggle—but it is a risk, and not a fatal necessity. Koestler was never happy with his withdrawal from politics. For he could not forget that the real choice in the defence of freedom was between the *intelligent* and *unintelligent* struggle against its enemies; and that the alternative of withdrawal, despite the posturing about non- or passive resistance to the heirs of Lenin and Stalin, was in effect acquiescence to their grand design.

Koestler's refusal to make moral compromises reflected itself in small things, and in the embarrassments and foolishness that seemed to attend him wherever he went—in his lecture tours in the United States, Japan, India, everywhere except Central Europe whose conventions he was brought up in. He would take umbrage at customs that he felt outraged his dignity and his exaggerated sense of fairness. It left his hosts feeling

[1] As William Buckley has noted (New York *Daily News*, 8 March 1983) ". . . when Whittaker Chambers published his book *Witness*, twelve years after *Darkness at Noon*, Chambers received from Koestler a single line: 'You did not return from Hell with empty hands.' . . ."

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Manifesto of Freedom (1950)

1 **We hold it to be self-evident that intellectual freedom is one of the inalienable rights of man.**

2 *Such freedom is defined first and foremost by his right to hold and express his own opinions, and particularly opinions which differ from those of his rulers. Deprived of the right to say "no", man becomes a slave.*

3 **Freedom and peace are inseparable. In any country, under any régime, the overwhelming majority of ordinary people fear and oppose war. The danger of war becomes acute when governments, by suppressing democratic representative institutions, deny to the majority the means of imposing its will to peace.**
Peace can be maintained only if each government submits to the control and inspection of its acts by the people whom it governs, and agrees to submit all questions immediately involving the risk of war to a representative international authority, by whose decision it will abide.

4 **We hold that the main reason for the present insecurity of the world is the policy of governments which, while paying lip-service to peace, refuse to accept this double control. Historical experience proves that wars can be prepared and waged under any slogan, including that of peace. Campaigns for peace which are not backed by acts that will guarantee its maintenance are like counterfeit currency circulated for dishonest purposes. Intellectual sanity and physical security can only return to the world if such practices are abandoned.**

5 *Freedom is based on the toleration of divergent opinions. The principle of toleration does not logically permit the practices of intolerance.*

6 **No political philosophy or economic theory can claim the sole right to represent freedom in the abstract. We hold that the value of such theories is to be judged by the range of concrete freedom which they accord the individual in practice.**
We likewise hold that no race, nation, class or religion can claim the sole right to represent the idea of freedom, nor the right to deny freedom to other groups or creeds in the name of any ultimate ideal or lofty aim whatsoever. We hold that the historical contribution of any society is to be judged by the extent and quality of the freedom which its members actually enjoy.

7 **In times of emergency, restrictions on the freedom of the individual are imposed in the real or assumed interest of the community. We hold it to be essential that such restrictions be confined to a minimum of clearly specified actions; that they be understood to be temporary and limited expedients in the nature of a sacrifice; and that the measures restricting freedom be themselves subject to free criticism and democratic control. Only thus can we have a reasonable assurance that emergency measures restricting freedom will not degenerate into a permanent tyranny.**

8 *In totalitarian states restrictions on freedom are no longer intended and publicly understood as sacrifice imposed on the people, but are on the contrary represented as triumphs of progress and achievements of a superior civilisation. We hold that both the theory and practice of these régimes run counter to the basic rights of the individual and the fundamental aspirations of mankind as a whole.*

9 **We hold the danger represented by these régimes to be all the greater since their means of enforcement far surpasses that of all previous tyrannies in the history of mankind. The citizen of the totalitarian state is expected and forced not only to abstain from crime but to conform in all his thoughts and actions to a prescribed pattern. Citizens are persecuted and condemned on such unspecified and all-embracing charges as "enemies of the people" or "socially unreliable elements."**

10 *We hold that there can be no stable world so long as mankind, with regard to freedom, remains divided into "haves" and "have-nots." The defence of existing freedoms, the reconquest of lost freedoms [and the creation of new freedoms] are parts of the same struggle.*

11 **We hold that the theory and practice of the totalitarian state are the greatest challenge which man has been called on to meet in the course of civilised history.**

12 *We hold that indifference or neutrality in the face of such a challenge amounts to a betrayal of mankind and to the abdication of the free mind. Our answer to this challenge may decide the fate of man for generations.*

13 **[The defence of intellectual liberty today imposes a positive obligation: to offer new and constructive answers to the problems of our time.]**

14 *We address this manifesto to all men who are determined to regain those liberties which they have lost and to preserve [and extend] those which they enjoy.*

---

* In his Danube Edition commentary to the Manifesto as reprinted in *The Trail of the Dinosaur* (1955, 1970), Koestler drily pointed out that "the words in square brackets were added to the draft by the British members of the editorial committee, Professor A. J. Ayer and Mr Hugh Trevor-Roper."

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puzzled and hostile at his apparent rudeness and therefore completely insensitive to the political truths he had come to discourse about.

Koestler was in his element in the founding meeting of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in West Berlin when, with the outbreak of war in Korea (June 1950), it seemed as if the Kremlin would close its armoured grip on the surrounded and isolated half-city. He acted as a disciplined member of the steering committee, punctiliously attended sub-committee sessions, intervened effectively in three languages, showed an unwonted pragmatic disposition to compromise, and turned the other cheek to barbs hurled at him by some delegates who thought his formulations too sharp. Koestler offered a brace of papers that were productive of fruitful discussion. The first was on "Two Methods of Action." Its basic thesis was that at certain times and with respect to certain issues, instead of saying "*Neither-Nor*" and looking for other viable alternatives, we must recognise that our choice is limited to an "*Either-Or.*" It was directed against the type of intellectual who in the mid-1930s would have exploded with indignation at those who absolved themselves from the necessity of taking a stand with the observation, "I am neither a Fascist nor an anti-Fascist", but who even now, in the face of the revelations of the enormity of Stalin's crimes and the growing threat of Communist aggression, were proclaiming "I am neither a Communist nor an anti-Communist." His second paper, "The Fake Dilemma", showed how far Koestler was from universalising dilemmatic situations. He decried the easy distinction between "Left" and "Right" as cognitively meaningless because of the varying emotive and historical connotations of the terms. And once we turned away from conceptual structures, he denied that our viable practical choice was limited to either capitalism or socialism. In practice it was not *Either-Or* but *More-or-Less*. In effect, although he did not phrase it this way, in our time the mode of political decision was more fateful than the mode of economic production. (Unfortunately some delegates misconstrued this as an attack on democratic socialism.)

To Koestler we also owe most of the memorable Freedom Manifesto of 1950. Its provisions were hammered out in committee meetings, some of them quite hectic. But the animating spirit and major formulations were his. [See text in adjoining box.] It was a great loss to the Congress that despite his role in its organisation he withdrew from all activity within a year or two. He became convinced that it had become diverted from its educational-political task by its other cultural (art, music) activities.

THERE WAS MUCH MORE TO Arthur Koestler than his role of embattled cold warrior. Our relations were

Iain Hamilton

KOESTLER

"Here Koestler is, authentically, the sacred—always, even now, the only one in step . . . The strength of Iain Hamilton's biography is that it made me recognise Koestler's greatness all over again. This isn't only a biography—it's a dazzled and delighted discovery."

John Braine

"Iain Hamilton's achievement is to show, and to some degree explain, an extraordinary personality. His own character shines through this sympathetic and brilliant study. To recreate Koestler is a not inconsiderable job." **John Vaizey,** *Listener*

"The great merit of Mr Hamilton's book is that . . . it never fails to bring out that remarkable combination of creative energy, boundless knowledge and hard-edged logic."

Francis King, *Sunday Telegraph*

"What went before and what came after in the world Koestler helped to transform, the incisiveness of almost all his political writing, all this and much else is chronicled in Iain Hamilton's book. What about Koestler himself? . . . My answer is that the book is absorbing on this personal level too."

Michael Foot, *Observer*

"To anyone who cares about the battle of ideas in the twentieth century it is fascinating." **Paul Johnson,** *Times Literary Supplement*

£12.00

Secker & Warburg

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never close. He thought I was politically naive about Europeans, and sometimes too professorial and sophistical in argument. He was at times irritable and abrasive in his rejoinders to my occasional criticism of his behaviour; but the more I learned about him directly and from others, the more I was impressed by his heroic qualities which he himself tried to do his best to deny and destroy. There is no need to describe his philanthropic dispensations under the seal of anonymity to refugee writers from Iron Curtain countries. He always regarded these as small matters. But I vividly recall the remark made to me by one of Koestler's acquaintances who had been in a concentration camp with him. "He found me boring and took few pains to conceal it, but when the pinch came he put his life on the line for me—when no one else did." He was an exemplary European "freedom-fighter", loyal, courageous, conscientious, self-sacrificing.

In what matters most Arthur Koestler could always be counted upon. His end became him.

An English Appreciation

In the Tradition of Daniel Defoe

By Maurice Cranston

London

IF ANY WRITER of our generation is still being read in the distant future that writer will surely be Arthur Koestler. No other writer lived so fully and intensely a uniquely 20th-century experience, touching the extremes, and producing in his books the feel of what it has all been like. He may even be better understood and more appreciated in the future than he is at present, for his books have been too close to the nerve for many people in our time to accept them without a certain resistance.

It is often said of Arthur that he was the best foreign writer of English prose since Joseph Conrad. And he was. But Arthur was a very different kind of novelist. Conrad was undoubtedly very important, but the political dimension is ambiguous; he gives us certain intimations of the travail of Western empires on the fringes of barbarism, but it is all very indirect and allusive. Koestler's works are, by contrast, wholly direct and unequivocal. You know where he stands; there is no mistaking what he has to say. There are very few writers who have succeeded as he did in transforming the raw material of violent political experience—of conspiracy, revolution, oppression, and war—into literature. If we think of Malraux or Sartre we see raw facts overwhelmed by vast metaphysical constructions. Arthur Koestler was more like Daniel Defoe: a writer who abolished the frontier between journalism and literature after he had passed through the fires of revolutionary action, plotting, fighting, the pillory and prison, without losing his robust good sense, his nose for evidence, and his desire to get things down just as they had happened.

But even in the case of Daniel Defoe, the best books came in the second half of his life, in the relative tranquillity of Georgian England, whereas in Koestler's case it is the early books, written in the heat of the worst events, written in the era of the Third Reich and of Stalin, Franco, and Pétain, that appear to reach the higher peaks of literature.

Darkness at Noon, that undisputed and indestructible classic, must have been completed before Arthur was released from Pentonville Prison in 1940. It was written in an environment as unfavourable to creative writing as anyone can imagine: in circumstances which he himself describes in *Scum of the Earth*, that haunting narrative of a Jewish refugee on the run from Hitler and Hitler's all-too-willing collaborators. Arthur once told me that he did not need a study in which to write a book. He said he learned the trade as a newspaperman. "You have to put so many words on the page by a certain hour, and you do it—whatever the distraction. . . ." This was perhaps an advantage he derived from having had a scientific education at a *Realschule* rather than a classical education; it had made him a "practical" writer. I think a good deal of romance and highly-strung aesthetic intensity went into Arthur's living, but his writing was a no-nonsense affair. The kind of truth he was out to communicate was a plain truth: and this is one thing that made his books so singular—for he wrote them at a time when Western political culture was dominated by half-truths, illusions, lies, self-deception, wishes, fears, yearnings and fantasies; and unfortunately it still very largely is.

ONE PART OF the greatness of *Darkness at Noon* is that it is the only book of its time which stripped off all the veils of ideology under which the Soviet régime was hidden; we had to wait for Solzhenit-

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syn's books to see, from the testimony of a Russian witness, how exact Koestler's insight had been. Arthur told me that when he was in the Soviet Union as a Communist in the 1930s he looked around without actually thinking, or, rather, thinking only about the job the Party had set him to do: to produce a sort of bourgeois guide to the USSR. His thinking came afterwards, when he was in Western Europe writing for Willy Muenzenberg, the Communist propaganda chief in Paris, and writing his first political novel, *The Gladiators*. *The Gladiators* might have been another of those Left-wing romances about ancient Rome that Howard Fast wrote in America if Arthur had been a similar kind of dreamer. But Arthur wanted his historical novel to be properly historical; and I think that he became very conscious of the irony of the situation, reaching for the truth about the past for his novel, and dissimulating the truth about the present in his work for Muenzenberg.

It was then, I think, that he decided to accept no more constraint on his freedom as writer, and bear his own witness to experience as he confronted it. As a reporter in Spain he could have escaped from Malaga before it fell, but he was determined, in his stubborn and intrepid way, to live through the experience of Franco's conquest; so he was captured and sentenced to death.

IT IS A SOURCE of some satisfaction to us, his English friends, to remember that it was the intervention of the British that saved his life at the time. When Arthur found refuge here, he showed his gratitude by sitting down and making himself a writer in English; and he became a remarkable stylist in our language. I believe he had a mind that could think easily in English. If there is such a thing as a tradition of English empiricism, as opposed to Continental rationalism, Arthur found he belonged by temperament to that tradition. The rhetorical and the baroque were equally alien to him; he believed in truth undraped, and he was a true child of the Enlightenment in his ability to love the two goddesses, science and liberty.

It is no accident that his first books, hack work done for money under the pseudonym of "Dr Costler", were encyclopaedias (admittedly encyclopaedias of sexual knowledge, but none the worse for that, and very useful in those innocent days). Koestler collected knowledge over a wide range; so it is only natural that his books cover many categories: novels, autobiography, criticism, the history of ideas, metaphysics, psychology, biology. He truly succeeded, where others failed, in bridging what C. P. Snow called "the Two Cultures." I think his essay on the nature of scientific discovery called *The Sleepwalkers* is a masterpiece, both from

"To Whom It May Concern"

THIS **note, addressed** *"To whom it may concern"* **was written and signed by Arthur Koestler in June 1982.**

THE PURPOSE *of this note is to make it unmistakeably clear that I intend to commit suicide by taking an overdose of drugs without the knowledge or aid of any other person. The drugs have been legally obtained and hoarded over a considerable period.*

Trying to commit suicide is a gamble the outcome of which will be known to the gambler only if the attempt fails, but not if it succeeds. Should this attempt fail and I survive it in a physically or mentally impaired state, in which I can no longer control what is done to me, or communicate my wishes, I hereby request that I be allowed to die in my own home and not be resuscitated or kept alive by artificial means. I further request that my wife, or physician, or any friend present, should invoke habeas corpus *against any attempt to remove me forcibly from my house to hospital.*

MY REASONS **for deciding to put an end to my life are simple and compelling: Parkinson's Disease and the slow-killing variety of leukemia (CCL). I kept the latter a secret even from intimate friends to save them distress. After a more or less steady physical decline over the last years, the process has now reached an acute state with added complications which make it advisable to seek self-deliverance now, before I become incapable of making the necessary arrangements.**

I WISH *my friends to know that I am leaving their company in a peaceful frame of mind, with some timid hopes for a depersonalised after-life beyond due confines of space, time and matter and beyond the limits of our comprehension. This "oceanic feeling" has often sustained me at difficult moments, and does so now, while I am writing this.*

What makes it nevertheless hard to take this final step is the reflection of the pain it is bound to inflict on my few surviving friends, and above all my wife Cynthia. It is to her that I owe the relative peace and happiness that I enjoyed in the last period of my life—and never before.

London, June 1982

A.K.

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the perspective of history and of philosophy. His reflections on scientific method match those of Popper and Lakatos. All his books have now been published in a uniform edition; I think it will help people to see, what they do not seem to realise now, that Koestler's work, for all its diversity, adds up to a well-integrated and systematic whole.

Most of us will remember Arthur Koestler as he *was*: in his conversation and his letters, in his rather special ways of behaving, his charm and his restlessness, and sometimes absurd enthusiasms. But the essential Arthur Koestler is still there, in his books; and for as long as they endure, posterity as well as his friends will be enriched by his life and achievement.

Biographee

By Iain Hamilton

WHILE I was co-editing *The Spectator* with its new owner, Ian Gilmour, the paper threw its support behind Koestler's campaign against capital punishment. But it was not until 1961, when I was editorial director of the Hutchinson group of publishing companies (but on the point of returning to *The Spectator* to take the place of my former deputy there, Dr Brian Inglis, as Editor) that Koestler and I first met. Koestler had changed publishers, moving from Collins to Hutchinson. We published *The Sleepwalkers* and he was at work on *The Act of Creation*. Robert Lusty, Chairman of Hutchinson's, and I were both members of the Garrick Club and it was there the three of us celebrated Koestler's appearance on the Hutchinson list. It was a long lunch, with good wine and conversation, Koestler's Asian mask cracking open frequently into that smile which was given a rare charm by the hint of menace in it.

It was six or seven years later that we met again, at an ENCOUNTER party. I had reviewed *The Ghost in the Machine* at some length in another magazine. My piece was full of praise for Koestler the sage, the implacable enemy of totalitarians, Behaviourists, and all other "tight-lipped technocratic conquistadores"; but it looked askance at his psychopharmacological prescription of a "peace pill" to remove the aggressive instincts of *homo sapiens*. We exchanged a few words only, friendly but of no significance. My wife, however, had a slightly longer conversation with him, in the course of which she was surprised to learn that—in spite of my inability to take seriously his notion of psychopharmacological salvation—he "admired" me. I mention it here not out of self-satisfaction but only because it may throw some light on my third encounter with Koestler.

In the late summer of 1973, a publisher came to me with the proposal that I write Koestler's biography. Why me? Because Koestler had suggested me. That was all very well, but how on earth could one attempt anything like a "true biography" of someone alive and kicking, whose reputation for touchiness was famous even in this most quarrelsome of trades? Prudent friends counselled caution. My reluctance, however, was soon eroded by Koestler's charm. There was no touchiness in his assurance that I would have access to his papers and a free hand, or in his injunction that I should write about him as if he were already dead and so (in a curious phrase which I would have been well advised to ponder more carefully than I did) "preempt *The Times*' obituary." My agent's negotiations with the publisher concerned came to nothing; what had been envisaged, apparently, was not so much a biography as an extended and laudatory profile (to be knocked out quickly in time for Koestler's 70th birthday). This was a chore of no interest to me; and it seemed also that Koestler himself expected something more substantial in exchange for his cooperation. So the matter was dropped and I let it lie. Some weeks later, David Farrer (of Secker & Warburg) picked it up and showed it to the publisher Tom Rosenthal. Rosenthal's enthusiasm reinfected Koestler and me, and during March 1974 contracts were signed and exchanged by the three of us. The arrangements gave me the *sine qua non* of a free hand, and Koestler the right to read my text, point out errors of fact, and give me the benefit of his advice, if he saw fit, in matters of interpretation—but no right of censorship, far less of veto, of my account, in part or as a whole.

AND SO BEGAN the transfer of papers from the Koestler house in Knightsbridge. (Four years later this was still in progress; Koestler's preliminary sifting and sorting of papers turned out to be a painfully slow and laborious task.) Thousands of documents overflowed from six-foot filing cabinets into suitcases and wine-boxes stacked on the floor of my Highgate study. In 1974 a letter announcing the work and inviting reminiscences had been published in some 60 newspapers and periodicals throughout North America, Western Europe, Israel, India, Japan, and Australasia. The response was meagre—some hazy memories from a few German and Austrian women; anecdotes from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv; a valuable letter from Nobel Prize-winner, Professor Denis Gabor; a few scurrilities from people who had been offended by Koestler or his work; some odd communications from Bengalis. Just as I had concluded that there was nothing left to be dredged up, Celia Goodman

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(née Paget) presented me with photocopies of the many letters written to her by her twin, Mamaine (Koestler's second wife) between 1944 and 1954—a traumatic decade in Koestler's life, and the last in Mamaine's. Koestler had always hitherto declined to read these letters. Now, twenty years after Mamaine's death, he brought himself to do so, supplementing Celia's annotations for my benefit. In the meantime my wife was transcribing into some ninety foolscap pages of typescript the tapes of earlier conversations I had had with Koestler. This was heavy going. Koestler detested microphones because they reminded him of his heavy Central European accent; this had the effect of making him self-conscious, and so much more hesitant and less articulate than in ordinary conversation. Add to this his habit of walking up and down the creaking boards of his study, and the difficulties in interpreting the cacophony and reducing it to intelligibility can be imagined.

THE BIOGRAPHER'S RELATIONSHIP with the biographee was easy and amicable. We met frequently, sometimes in Highgate, much more often in Knightsbridge. There was a good deal of correspondence, much telephoning. Koestler, fearful lest he should one day be asked to break his routine and set aside whatever he was himself writing in order to read a complete revised typescript of his biography,

"Submission to Moscow"

IN the last week of his life Arthur Koestler decided, despite long self-imposed abstinence, to return to the political theme of the Moscow Trials, if only as a signatory of a letter to "The Times." For some unfathomable reason "The Times" set it up in print but, in its cryptic-Mandarin way, found it "impossible to publish." How amused Koestler would have been at yet another example of the "Old Struthonian" behaviour which he had once, in ENCOUNTER (July 1963) described as "the Lion" behaving like "an Ostrich", burying his head "in the sand with the tranquil conviction that Reality is a nasty word invented by foreigners. . . ."

★

SIR,

There has been much criticism recently of the political bias which has been creeping into television programming, especially into that of the new ITV Channel 4, whether as a result of sheer naivety, ignorance, or deliberate political slanting. The feature film shown last Saturday [19 February] on Channel 4 raises this question again in an acute form.

For surely, of the thousands of old Hollywood films to choose from, Channel 4's selection of Warner Bros' notorious version of US Ambassador Joseph Davies' "Mission to Moscow" (1943) must be either the most mindless or the most malicious choice possible. It was at the time an unadulterated propaganda operation to sell the "honesty and integrity" of Stalin's leadership to the American people. In the course of so doing, it twisted history, maligned the victims of Stalin's terror, and gave a version of the 1930s which cast the Russians as heroes, the British as sinister plotters and the poor Trotskyites (some of whom are still around) as evil "agents of Hitler." Even at the time it was exposed for what it was (and by those who believed in the necessity of a military alliance with the USSR). Forty years on, after all we have learned from Khrushchev and others about Stalin's crimes, from Solzhenitsyn about the horrors of the Gulag, it is obvious that "Mission to Moscow" is nothing but a travesty of the truth and a desecration of the uses of honest "documentary" cinema.

Still there may be some—a percentage point in the Channel 4 ratings amounts, we are told, to tens of thousands of viewers—who could have been deceived by this abysmal, antiquated defence of Stalin's Show Trials and of the admirable qualities of the Kremlin's foreign policy at that time (and possibly, by implication, now). We wonder whether Channel 4 will be ready to offer the critics the "Right to Reply" to "this fascinating account based on true events" ("TV Times"). We feel that Channel 4 is honour-bound to help set the record straight on this two-hour-long series of distortions in what was called in its day Ambassador Davies' "Submission to Moscow."

ARTHUR KOESTLER ALUN CHALFONT
LEONARD SCHAPIRO LEOPOLD LABEDZ
MELVIN J. LASKY

London

★

"Strange Coincidence"

BY ONE of those coincidences for which his name became an eponym, Arthur Koestler felt stirred enough at the very end of his life to write to "The Times" on a political matter. He was the leading signatory of a letter protesting at the decision to resurrect on television the 1943 film "Mission to Moscow", which took a warm-hearted view of Stalin and Soviet life. "For years he had refrained from publicly commenting on politics", said a friend, "but when they dragged out this ridiculous film, whitewashing all the Moscow trials about which his masterpiece had been written, he felt it was completely as if 'Darkness At Noon' didn't exist." "The Times" received the letter a couple of days before Koestler died; by another one of those strange coincidences they never used it.

THE GUARDIAN

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had asked me if he might see the rough draft in small batches—two or three chapters at a time. Forgetting for the moment the old admonition that it is not only to children and fools that unfinished work should not be shown, I had agreed. We both had other things to do—and, as luck had it, such lengthy spells as I could devote entirely to the book were usually those when he was most preoccupied with his own work.

The draft grew steadily, but rather more slowly than I would have wished. Additional complications arose from my undertaking to send Celia photocopies of the many chapters in which I had made use, directly or otherwise, of Mamaine's letters and diaries. Not that Celia was one to waste time by fussing about trifles of nuance with which she was not entirely in agreement. Her comments and corrections—the latter few, brief, and always to the point, the former invariably gratifying—always reached me within a few days. But some of her emendations, however minor, meant a recasting of the passages concerned. Koestler had to see the revises, of course: and this led frequently to lengthy discussions. Cynthia was always in attendance at those meetings, shorthand notebook and pencil at the ready; and more than once she made it clear that she disagreed with her predecessor's descriptions of Koestler's character and behaviour. "That's not at all like Arthur!" she would exclaim. Koestler paid no attention to such loyal objections. "Let it stand!" he would say of any passage which showed him in a light more lurid than likeable. He asked me on several occasions to reinstate unflattering observations which I had deleted at Celia's request (but here it was her wishes which I invariably respected).

AT THE END OF the long hot summer of 1976, arsonists made an attempt, which came close to success, to destroy our house in Highgate. News of this from Scotland Yard brought to an abrupt end a brief holiday in Somerset. The fire engines, we were told, had arrived when the fire, which had destroyed half of the first floor, was charring the joists of my study above. Twenty minutes more and the entire house, and everything in it, would have been ablaze. Nothing of value, so far as we could tell, had been stolen. But my study had been rifled and some correspondence concerning the British-Irish Association, of which I was a founder-member, removed. Perhaps it had been taken downstairs to add to the bonfires which had been built (according to the forensic experts) and enriched with some unidentified accelerant. More immediately alarming was the disappearance of the Koestler typescript. The briefcase in which I had left it was empty: had the thieves taken it away with them? And if so, why? Or had it fed the fire in our bedroom? Five days later, we discovered all but a few pages of the typescript, which had apparently been shaken out of the dozen folders which had contained them, shuffled, and stuffed into a portfolio. The arsonists may have intended this to help the fire catch quickly on the top floor. Fortunately, all but a few of the pages were undamaged except for smudges of smoke and steam, so I was spared the fearsome labour of starting out again from Vienna in 1905.

News must have been scarce that day because the fire was widely reported—presumably because the house had been John Betjeman's childhood home. When Koestler, who was in Suffolk at the time, was at length able to reach me by telephone, he was greatly concerned, understandably, about the safety of his papers. In spite of my assurances that they were undamaged and that a neighbour had offered houseroom for all the contents, he insisted that they should be sent to a depository for safekeeping. He was under the impression that the arsonists were out to damage him by destroying his papers. I could not see this, but no matter: the papers were his, and he feared that they might be burned in another attempt; so off they went into a strong-room, and it was six months before I saw them again.

The delays were vexatious to me, but apparently not to Koestler. He urged me to take my time. "From my point of view", he wrote, "there is no hurry whatsoever." That was just as well, since he had just presented me with a stout collection of files containing his correspondence with various British, American, Canadian, Swedish, Austrian, and German academics whose subjects ranged from atomic and molecular physics to zoology, by way of many more disciplines than there are letters in the alphabet.

By the autumn of 1978 the draft was all but complete. The penultimate section dealt with Koestler's growing interest in the paranormal (which struck me, I have to say, as typical of the retreat into the irrational common among ex-Communists who cannot, or refuse to, quench their thirst for the absolute with the disciplined "irrationality" of religious dogma); this was not quite finished. A lengthy interview in which he was to look back over his life and times (and forward into the menacing future) was not to be recorded and transcribed until the last possible moment. So a rough mass, amounting to something like 350,000 words, had to be reduced, reshaped, and revised into more appropriate proportions and scale. But this seemed unlikely to present any difficulty.

A WEEK OR SO AFTER I had sent Koestler three ofthe outstanding chapters, a letter arrived from an old friend, a lawyer who had frequently acted for me while I was at Hutchinson and *The Spectator*. Fol-

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Hutchinson are proud to announce the publication in October of the final volume of Arthur Koestler's autobiography

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lowing a kindly enquiry after the well-being of myself and my family, and the observation that we hadn't met at the Garrick for some time, he announced that he was acting for our common friend, Arthur, who had supplied him with a lengthy catalogue of complaints about my text (which Koestler had read, of course, and to which he had raised no objection) and about the indisputable fact that the book was not yet complete (for reasons he understood very well). Koestler was deprived of his voluminous private papers; he had no current knowledge of the progress I was making; although he had "corrected" the draft chapters, he was not to be taken as having approved them. Some of my quotations from Mamaine (Paget) Koestler and Simone de Beauvoir would give readers a critical, even a cruel, view of his character; and he would have expected me to ask him specifically for comments about particular remarks about him. Finally, I learned that Koestler had in mind the scrapping of the original tripartite agreement and the substitution of a revised version which would in effect give him the power of censorship and veto—something absolutely unacceptable to me and my publisher.

This sudden onslaught took me aback. Why this extraordinary volte-face? Why such a fierce ultimatum at such a late stage? On the following morning a letter arrived from Koestler himself. It was mild in tone—conciliatory almost—and contained no lengthy litany of complaint and objection. What Koestler did take specific exception to was my account of his activities in Israel after the proclamation of the new state, during the Arab-Jewish war and the confrontation between David Ben-Gurion's administration and the terrorist Irgun Zvai Leumi led by Menachem Begin. Koestler had supported Begin (to the disgust of Ben-Gurion and the dismay of his old friends Teddy Kollek and Moshe Sharret). All three had upbraided Koestler bitterly for this, and he had recorded their scathing attacks in the diaries which he had made available to me. Mamaine's letters to Celia during this period were ample evidence of the intense strain affecting them both at the time. The galley-proofs of Koestler's book about Zionism, *Promise and Fulfilment* (1949) were further evidence of the accuracy of my account. Koestler's objection was that it gave a one-sided and misleading picture of his attitude to the problems of Israel. Presumably he would have been happier if I had based the chapter not on letters, diaries, cables, memoranda, notes, newspaper clippings, and drafts of articles, but on his own published version, softened and smoothed by heavy cutting and rewriting, in *Promise and Fulfilment*. No echo here of "Write about me as if I were dead"! Not that I was unsympathetic; and it must have been singularly unpleasant for him to read, after so many years, the scathing strictures of Kollek and Sharret, old comrades-in-arms in the Zionist cause. We patched things up somehow. I removed from the offending chapter the more savage of the attacks; and, at the end of a two-day session in which Koestler and I went through the draft line by line, I tried (without much success) to explain to my subject why neither I nor my publisher could possibly agree to any revised arrangement which would give him the power, if he wished to exercise it, to break the contract unilaterally and with impunity, and prevent publication.

OUR FAILURE to acquiesce in his proposal did not, however, deter him from attempting to do precisely this a few months later. A lengthy letter from our mutual friend conveyed the news that Koestler forbade me to quote a line from his published works and private papers (including letters from third parties), and that Celia Goodman—with whom I had been on the best of terms and who had consistently congratulated me on my handling of her late sister's papers—revoked her permission to quote from them. So began an all-out, expensive, unjustifiable—and futile—attempt to suppress the book, or failing that, to emasculate it, which he did not abandon until the spring of 1981.

It would be distasteful to dwell on the unpleasant events of this long campaign—almost two years—or the no less disagreeable manner in which it ended. In 1978, and again in 1979, after the salvos had crashed around us, and I was racking my brains in the vain attempt to puzzle out the reason for Koestler's actions, my wife said, "He must think that he is going to die. . . ." I brushed this aside as fanciful, and it was not until May 1982 that I learned, from Celia Goodman, that he had been unwell.

Hearing the dreadful news of the double suicide, and learning for the first time of the diseases that had been consuming him, I was glad to recall that Celia had made peace between us not long after the publication of the book last year, while I was being praised by some and abused by others, especially—in the case of the critics—for my failure to write the book that could only have been written had not the biographer to cope with the biographee.

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Author

By Harold Harris

We first met at an Encounter party. I introduced myself as the new editorial director of his London publishers. Arthur Koestler said, "I am glad to meet you at last. I wondered when you were going to get in touch with me. . . ." This was slightly embarrassing as I had been firmly told, when I expressed interest in our house's most illustrious author, that he was a difficult man, that he was very satisfied with the present arrangement, and that on no account should I interfere.

It appeared that, far from being satisfied with the present arrangement, he was extremely unhappy about the proof of his new book, *The Act of Creation* (1964). His punctuation and the way in which extracts from other works had been set out had been altered from the original script in order to conform with what is called "house style." When he complained he received a letter from a senior production executive giving him a lecture on the subject of book design. The whole story was told to me in a most reasonable way on my first visit, some time in 1963, to the house in Montpelier Square that I was to come to know so well. Cynthia showed me the correspondence (which she was able to produce at a moment's notice). Arthur was perplexed about how to handle the situation rather than angry, restrained in his complaint, and anxious not to cause any trouble for the man in the production department.

I have told this story at some small length because it illustrates something fundamental in his character and attitudes. Perhaps I was just lucky to meet him in his mellow years. He was modest almost to the point of betraying a lack of confidence, and when I mentioned this to him some years later (after I had got to know him better), he referred me to the remark made by Otto Katz—the Cominterm agent and associate of Koestler in the 1930s (he was hanged in Prague in 1952)—"We all have inferiority complexes of various sizes. . . . But yours isn't a complex—it's a cathedral! . . . ."

Indeed, he writes himself in *Arrow in the Blue* about his boundless timidity and insecurity at the age of 16. This shyness was to stay with him for the rest of his life. He hated public appearances, though he made them from time to time, and could only be persuaded much against his will to give a radio interview because he was so self-conscious about his strong Central European accent.

It must have been six or seven years after our first meeting that the Koestlers invited my wife and me to Alpbach, the Tyrolean resort where Arthur had built a chalet. They were wonderful hosts and took us to see all their favourite spots in the Austrian countryside. It was at Alpbach that we first realised how Cynthia had devoted her entire life to looking after Arthur—as companion, secretary, hostess, housekeeper, cook and, in later years, chauffeuse. On the days when we were not sightseeing she and Arthur would be working until lunchtime when we would meet briefly if we happened to be in the village on that day. At 6.30 in the evening he would call up to the guest wing, "The bar is open!" and we all gathered outside on the terrace to start a convivial evening of gossip and often fascinating talk by Arthur about one or other of his hobby-horses.

On one occasion I remember that after a time Cynthia stood up and murmured that she must go and prepare dinner. Arthur restrained her. "We are just enjoying our drinks", he said, "don't go now." "But Arthur, I must go and cook the supper!" It was no good. If he wanted her beside him nothing else mattered.

But, in fact, meals did matter. They both enjoyed good food, and Arthur especially made a point of sampling all the restaurants in any area where he found himself. They form a fair proportion of the entries in his address book which is now in my keeping, some of them, I am pleased to see, recommended by me.

"You know why I like being published by Hutchinson?" he once asked me. If I expected a compliment about sensitive editing I was to be disappointed. "Because", he answered his own question, "I like having a greedy editor. . . ."

Arthur and Cynthia were married in New York in 1965 on their way to California, where Arthur was to head a seminar at the Center for Advanced Study for Behavioural Science at Stanford University. The six months which he spent at Stanford in the company of internationally famous scientists were, in some ways, the high point of his scientific career; for it was in this world that he was most anxious to shine. Hence the Symposium which he himself organised at Alpbach. He financed it with the advances paid by his English, American, and Austrian publishers for a book of the proceedings (plus an additional grant of $1000 from the Ford Foundation). He had for long been on the international conference circuit and referred to himself as a kind of scientific call-girl. Hence his novel *The Call-Girls* which followed in 1972 and which poked gentle fun at symposia in general and his own at Alpbach in particular. It was by no means the best of his fiction, but it was fun for those who knew the background. The Symposium was his swansong so far as international seminars and Alpbach itself were concerned.

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HIS REASONS for leaving Alpbach were complex, but as usual he summed them up in one telling and amusing story. His house was built on a hill on one side of a valley. On the crest of the opposite hill the young men of the village would congregate with their motor-cycles and, one by one, start them up and roar down into the valley. Then, at full throttle, they crashed up the Koestlers' hill, past the house, and away into the distance. "It takes each rider approximately four-and-a-half minutes to reach us", he complained. "I am in the middle of a sentence when I hear the motor-cycle start, and have to stop writing, pen in hand for 4½ minutes. Then just as I am about to start writing again, the next one starts up. . . ." He sold Alpbach to Fritz Molden, his Austrian publisher.

HE STILL LIKED to get out of London from time to time, needing a place where he felt he could work in peace. When my wife and I went for a holiday to Eze in the South of France he asked us to let him know if the house which we had rented from friends would be suitable for him to work in during the winter. We both thought it would be; I telephoned Arthur, described the house, and invited him to spend a week-end with us to inspect it. He could not spare the time, but asked for the telephone number of our friends so that he could book it right away for that winter. I protested feebly. "Three winter months is a long time", I said. "What if you don't like the house? What will you do then?" "Change my publisher", he replied. He spent two winters in Eze before that house too was bought by one of his publishers—this time his French publisher.

THE NEXT HOUSE he bought was Water Lane Farmhouse at Denston in Suffolk, and there he and Cynthia spent many happy months at work and

Budapest Cafés

BUDAPEST *was a strange society, and quite different in atmosphere from literary cliques in Paris, London or Berlin. Post-war Hungary was a dwarf-state, with a population of seven million of whom the majority were semi-literate peasants. Like Austria, it lived in a permanent economic depression, only interrupted by acute crisis. But unlike Austria and other small countries, it had no ties, through a shared language, with the cultures of larger neighbours; the Magyars are an isolated ethnic enclave in Europe, and their only relatives are the distant Finns.*

Hungarian writers could only secure a larger audience by emigrating, and learning to write in the language of their adopted country. But to abandon his native language and traditions means in most cases death to the writer, and his transformation into a nondescript, cosmopolitan journalist or literary hack. Hungary's main export since the first World War had been reporters, scriptwriters, film producers, magazine editors, commercial artists, actresses, and manufacturers of topical best-sellers—the international demi-monde of the arts and letters. They were strewn all over the world by that centrifugal force which is generated when an exceptional amount of talent is cooped up without means of expression in a small country. Though I had the good fortune to be brought up bilingually and to leave Hungary as a child, I have paid the penalty which the loss of one's cultural roots entails through a long time.

THOSE WHO *remained at home were condemned to write for a small, spoiled, saturated audience. The leading Hungarian poets and novelists of the nineteen-twenties and 'thirties would have occupied an honourable place in the literature of any great nation. The smallness and misery of their country condemned them to eke out their living by writing newspaper columns, and at the same time forced them to live in an atmosphere of mental inbreeding. Writers in larger countries, once they grow out of their juvenile cliques, avoid this by instinct; but the small-town artist is condemned to a lifelong intellectual ghetto. The literary ghettos of Budapest were the cafés, which were also the headquarters of the warring factions. Many writers worked, read, and received their visitors in cafés. They had their reserved tables, their habits, their courts.*

THESE PECULIAR **circumstances lent the intellectual life of the town a warm intimacy which entirely captivated me. After a year spent in the grim human desert of Russia, I was suddenly thrown upon the bosom of a cosy, incestuous family. I remained a convinced Marxist, and was to stay in the Communist Party for another five years, but I have always been hungry for contrast, for a manner of existence directly opposed to the one I was supposed to be leading. If ever there existed a decadent society, it was here in the cafés of Budapest. For me it was a perfect escapist holiday, and at the same time a confirmation of my belief that bourgeois culture was doomed.**

A.K.

in *The Invisible Writing*

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entertaining friends. As always in his establishments there was a guest-wing so that visitors could be reasonably independent if they wished. But they had to be available in the evenings for conversation and/or Scrabble (which became an increasing obsession in the last years, although he never achieved championship status). Cynthia added to her other duties by becoming an eager and successful gardener and looking after their two dogs—David (the Lhasa Apso) and Goliath, the huge Newfoundland, which Cynthia used to enter in dog shows, without telling Arthur, so that she had to play truant to get him there.

DURING THE LAST YEARS it was a sadness to me that, apart from his interest in the paranormal, his writing was confined to reworking some of the ground he had already tilled. *Janus* was a summing up of his books over the past twenty-five years. *Bricks to Babel*, which he called "an omnibus", was a rich and rewarding anthology selected from all his works, arranged thematically with a linking commentary. It was the only anthology of key passages of a writer's work, that I know of, selected by the author himself.

I often suggested to him that he should continue his autobiography which ended in 1940 at the conclusion of *The Invisible Writing*. Some weeks before his death, he told me he was doing this but swore me to secrecy. It now appears that this work was a kind of joint autobiography by Arthur and Cynthia of their life together, each writing alternate chapters. It starts in 1949 with Cynthia applying for a job as his part-time, temporary secretary, working at his house near Fontainebleau; and Cynthia had got up to 1956 when the end came. It provokes the usual sad question of the extent to which revision of unfinished, uncorrected work by a third party is justified. But the effort must be made, and it is hoped that the book can be published by the end of the year.

In his final note *"To Whom It May Concern"*, written nine months before they took their lives, he referred to the debt he owed to Cynthia "for the relative peace and happiness" he had enjoyed—for the first time—in the last period of his life, and I think that the years at Denston must have been strongly in his mind when he wrote this.

IF THE PICTURE I have painted of Arthur Koestler is a rather lightweight, personal one it is because in these early days of loss, I prefer to dwell on my relationship with him as a friend rather than as an Editor and Publisher. As I have said, I was fortunate in knowing him in his mellow years, and I never encountered personally the irascibility and sudden flashes of ill-temper of which one has heard so much and of which I caught only an occasional glimpse. To me he was an extremely endearing author to work with. Though he hated discussing work in progress he was always keen that I should read it as soon as he laid down his pen, and he would wait with some anxiety for the verdict. "If even *you* can understand it", he would say, "it must be okay. . . ." One book that he did discuss during its preparation was *The Thirteenth Tribe* (in which he suggested that Ashkenazi Jews were not Semites at all but converted Khazars, hailing from the Caucasus). I suggested the title which he adopted; and in consequence he dedicated the book to me, referring to me as the editor with whom he never quarrelled. It was the best compliment I ever received.

Chess Man

By David Pryce-Jones

ARTHUR KOESTLER happened to be ahead of me as I was boarding the *Loftleider* flight to Reyjavik, and so we took seats together. It was the first week of July 1972, and we were off to Iceland to cover the Spassky-Fischer chess championship, he for one Sunday paper, I for another. Atmospheric pieces were required, not analyses of the games. Departure was at half-past-eight in the morning. As soon as we were in the air, a voice came over the intercom, "Will Mr Arthur Koestler please make himself known?" He raised a hand.

Advancing, the stewardess said that she would like to serve him a drink, courtesy of *Loftleider*. *"Brantwein?"*, he inquired. "In Iceland we call it *brennevin*. . . ." Icelanders, we were to learn, speak English in an up-and-down whine, and are fond of instruction. From somewhere in the rear she fetched a bottle, a large home-brew kind of bottle, without a label, and poured out two mugs. From the reek, the stuff must have been distilled from potatoes, or wood, by peasants probably blinded or paralysed for life by their moonshining. I explained that at that hour of the day I could not come to terms with a brew like this, and Koestler then drank my mug as well as his own. Closing his eyes, he lay back: "But zis iss murder."

I had known him for about a dozen years. Originally I had written to ask for a contribution to the weekly magazine whose literary editor I then was. It turned out that I was living round the corner from him, and one Sunday he asked me to a drink before lunch. On that occasion, Goronwy Rees was describing the part played by Anthony Blunt in recruit-

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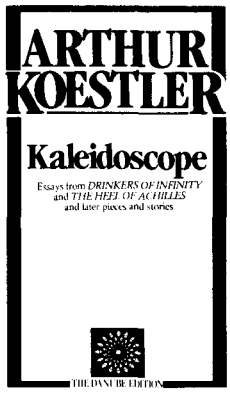
ing spies for the Soviet Union. Astounding as this was, Blunt's treason hardly seemed a state secret, even back in 1960.

THE AWE that I initially felt towards Koestler had subsided by the time we were on the flight to Iceland. His impulses were generous, his curiosity unlimited. To think of him as impatient or intolerant was to fail to perceive how he was governed by deep and admirable rage against the infamy of the times, which, by the law of probability, he ought not to have survived. Of course logic was a process of enforcing conclusions, with the inquisitional purr of that Hungarian accent; and issues could be less clear-cut than his presentation of them.

Whatever the subject might be, he judged it in every possible particular until a generality had been reached, either *this* or *that*. The English anecdotal style, in which meanings are left implied (and may even prove contradictory), was not for him. What was this dialectical muddle in which our national virtues and vices had been intimately and historically connected? England was "*the best country to sleep in*", as he liked to put it; and certainly he felt at home in it, sufficiently at home to challenge its *idées reçues*. Consider the famous tolerance: Might that not be an aspect of insularity? Was humanity here a factor of plain ignorance about "far-away" conditions elsewhere in the world?

More than he realised, perhaps, people who were instinctively grateful for their English good fortune looked to him in order to learn from his experiences. In return he wondered if they could ever *know* the truth of what Europeans had been through. I recall conversations about Communism and Nazism and Zionism, about Lukacs and Hungarian intellectuals, about the handing over of his once Communist friends, Alex Weissberg and Margarete Buber-Neumann, by the *NKVD* to the *Gestapo* at the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact; and I still see his expression of wary incredulity: "You

Passionate Duffer


ARTHUR KOESTLER
Kaleidoscope
Essays from DRINKERS OF INFINITY and THE HEEL OF ACHILLES and later pieces and stories
THE DANUBE EDITION

THE "WE" *refers to an endearing fraternity of men, to which I am proud to belong, known as the Passionate Duffers. We worship Caissa, the Muse of Chess, but owing to the inadequacy of our mental equipment can never hope to attain her favours, condemned as we are to remain life-long amateurs in the double meaning of that word: dilettantes and aficionados. Thus protected from the temptations of the arena, we have remained pure at heart and are all the more distressed by the degrading antics displayed prior to the match by the contestants and their banderilleros in the Russian and American Chess Federations. The haggling about the venue and the revenue, the political invectives and insinuations, make one almost feel that chess is a game too noble to be left to the chess players.*

YET, **all personal, political and tribal passions apart, the bloodiness would still be inherent in the royal game, and if it were not there the game would not be a symbol or paradigm of the working of the human mind. Chess is a battle of ideas; and the most savage battles have always been fought for ideas. No wonder that Caissa emerges from the medieval twilight with a tantalising smile and a dagger in her hand. She haunts Oriental legends and Nordic sagas in dramatic episodes where princes stake their fortunes or realms on a match against an outsider—who infallibly wins and is infallibly slain for his pains.**

My favourite yarn is in "St Olaf's Saga", where King Canute plays a game with Ulf Jarl (Earl Ulf). Canute blunders, making a hasty move which makes him lose a knight; then, in true duffer style, recalls his move and makes another instead. Ulf is furious, upsets the board, and takes sanctuary in a church—where he is slain the next day by Canute's henchmen.

BUT WHY **all the nastiness, why the apparent malignancy? The reason is intuitively felt by every chess player, yet difficult to explain without giving the impression of indulging in artificial profundities. In the first place, each chessman, whether bishop, rook, knight or queen, embodies a dynamic threat, as if it were alive and animated by the desire to inflict the maximum damage (by attack or defence) on the opponent's men. When a chess player looks at the board, he does not see a static mosaic, a "still-life", but a magnetic field of forces, charged with energy—as Faraday saw the stresses surrounding magnets and currents as curves in space, or as Van Gogh saw vortices in the skies of Provence. Thus there is a strong element of animism and magic in the game. Lewis Carroll was aware of it when he chose chessmen as the dramatis personae for** *Through the Looking Glass*; **and the Red Queen's "Off with his head" could come straight out of an Icelandic saga.**

NAIVE CHESS PLAYERS *occasionally have Walter Mitty dreams of carrying a computer in their brains which will calculate with lightning speed*

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went to the usual school. Eton I suppose—so how come you were sensitised to these things? Who was responsible for telling you? . . . "

WHAT I HAD NOT expected was the light-heartedness, even after the *brennevin*, with which he stepped out into the round-the-clock daylight of Reykjavik in summer. He was playing truant. He was a reporter once again. "He sniffs the air with animal cleverness", I wrote in a notebook, "he makes me think of an otter, trim, the coat in tip-top condition."

Besides, we had stepped straight into comedy. Bobby Fischer had not arrived. To judge from his pronouncements, he might never leave America, and the championship would founder. An opening ceremony was held in an almost unlit theatre, *Hamlet* without the prince indeed. Wringing his hands, the President of Iceland flitted through the proceedings. Already Spassky looked the victim of psychological skirmishing, not steady enough now for chess. His representatives, including a lugubrious Soviet Ambassador, were claiming victory by default. Max Auwe, chairman of the World Chess Federation, was an old acquaintance of Koestler's. Soon my telephone was ringing, for Koestler to say, "Still no chess today, I have it from Auwe. It is a scoop, but in confidence. Do not tell your paper." The cold war had come to this.

Many of the grand masters present latched on to him. They were revelling in move-a-minute games, or playing twenty boards at once, and trying to inveigle him to join in. I do not think he did so, though his theoretical knowledge of the game was impressive. The talk was all of Botvinnik, Capablanca, Alekhine. Fischer's genius was endlessly dissected. Koestler picked up one grand master's phrase and converted it into "ze mid-field aura of ze qveen." Enjoying himself more and more, he liked to argue that a computer would one day play the supreme game. During one of the series of press

all potential variations ahead of any given position and select each time the perfect move by eliminating, one by one, all the inferior moves. A single example will show that this is impossible.

The average number of legally permissible moves in a given position is around thirty. Say it is white's turn to move; to each of his thirty potential moves black has thirty potential answers, which leads, in round figures, to 1000 variations at the end of each "complete move" (one by white and one by black). Every one of these variations branches again into 1000 sub-variations two complete moves ahead, making a total of 1,000,000 positions; three complete moves ahead there will be 1,000,000,000 of them and so on, each move increasing the variations by a factor of 1000. The average length of a game between evenly matched partners of average strength is forty to forty-five complete moves; but, taking duffers into account, it may be a modest twenty-five.

Thus in order to decide on the perfect opening move, the Walter Mitty computer would have to calculate at least twenty-five moves ahead (and against a strong opponent perhaps twice as many).

Calculating twenty-five moves ahead would mean that the machine would have to generate a total number of moves in the order of 10^{75} (1 and 75 zeros). Even if the computer could operate at the rate of 1,000,000 moves every second, which is about 500 times faster than the most optimistic programme-designer would consider feasible, it would take 10^{69} seconds to complete the calculation.

Well, we couldn't wait that long. Ever since our planetary system came into being some 4½ billion years ago, no more than 10^{18} seconds have elapsed.

IN PLAYING *bridge or poker or scrabble, there is a large element of chance which provides a convenient excuse for being beaten. In chess, there is no such excuse. Yet the worst misfortunes are those for which one has oneself, and only oneself, to blame. It might seem that similar considerations apply to tennis or boxing, where also skill, not chance, decides the issue; and some of the stars in these games do indeed take defeats hard. But even if one is in principle prepared to put physical skill on a par with mental aptitude, the mind itself which makes these judgements won't have any of it. To be called clumsy is an acceptable insult; to be called stupid is unpardonable.*

The great Alekhine, when beaten, often threw his king across the room, and after one important lost game smashed up the furniture in his hotel suite. Steinitz, on a similar occasion, vanished from his quarters and was found disconsolately sitting on a bench in a deserted park. He died insane. So did Morphy, who preceded him as world champion. Morphy suffered from persecution mania; Steinitz from delusions; he thought he could speak over the telephone without using the instrument and that he could move chessmen by electricity discharged from the tips of his fingers. What sane person could devise a symbol more apt for the omnipotence of mind?

A.K.

"The Glorious & Bloody Game"
in *Kaleidoscope* (1981)

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conferences where the lugubrious Ambassador was yet again claiming Soviet victory, Koestler created quite a diversion by his explanation of the binary-denary system to those around him. "Are you *the* Arthur Koestler?" someone asked, only to receive the reply, "No, the other one."

ACCORDING TO THE GRAPEVINE, Spassky was longing to give an interview to Westerners, but could not escape the *KGB*. So we went to his hotel. Sure enough, he was sitting in the far corner of a public room on the first floor, with half-a-dozen guards on either side of him. Then he made for the lift. So did we. On the landing, however, the hurrying guards suddenly froze Spassky out, so that the non-Russians were all pushed into the lift together, and deposited on the ground floor. I decided to stay in the lift, and so found myself back on the first-floor landing, confronting Spassky. The *KGB* guards then froze me out, bundling Spassky into the lift, and going up, not down to Koestler and the others in the hall. The Marx Brothers could not have managed it better.

In the continuing absence of Bobby Fischer, Koestler was deep in local detail. The cod war was then harming England in the eyes of Icelanders. "*Second World War Comes to Iceland*" ran a headline in a newspaper, which waxed indignant about the dredging up from the harbour of a British bomb dropped on a German ship in 1941, without exploding. A young taxi-driver, asked to take us to the hotel, leant out of his window to answer back, "Why should I?" Did I realise, Koestler wanted to know, that dogs, cats, pets of all kinds, were forbidden by law in Reykjavik on grounds of hygiene? Had I noticed the peculiar smell of Icelanders? This was because hot water was piped direct into homes from the country's geysers—*guy-zers*, in his pronunciation—so that they were obliged to take sulphurated baths. What about the fact that corrugated iron on buildings in the town centre was considered old and important enough to come under a preservation order?

The good looks of Reykjavik women contrasted favourably with the insignificance of their men. This, Koestler speculated, might have something to do with historic antecedents: Norwegian genes to the women, Irish genes to the men. Reykjavik was a place where women felt free to accost male passers-by. This sexual frenzy, in his opinion, could be explained in terms of the northerly location. Obscured in winter darkness for half the year, women were driven to display themselves to as many men as possible in the other half. One evening, while we were having dinner in the hotel, a party of Reykjavik women broke in, shrieking with excitement that they were going to get their hands on Koestler, scattering waiters, upsetting a side-table. Going down under the press of them, he said very deliberately, "Zese are a degenerate people."[1]

After that, we ate at a restaurant with a striking name. "Ve vill go to Nausea", he would say, though Nausea had its hazards for him too. A man alleged to be the national poet was lying at the foot of the bar. Every so often he would haul himself up for *brennevin* (which Koestler had never touched again), pointing a finger and bellowing, "I know you! You are Hungarian, yes! But not Koestler—your name is Istvan Szabo!" Each time, the national poet then relapsed to his position on the floor.

At the point when it had become tedious to plan another trip to a *guy-zer*, Bobby Fischer slipped in. The telephone rang. "Confidentially, Auwe says they will definitely be playing. It is a scoop. Do not tell your paper." Had Fischer calculated the delaying ploy? Though Spassky was now pale and appeared to have the shakes, Fischer did not look in complete control of his nerves. But play they did. We watched. Somehow it was an anti-climax. The analysts had taken over. And perhaps the papers had had enough of our scoops. We returned home.

[1] Curiously enough, Koestler had written in his Reykjavik diary: "... Funny to be a war correspondent again after all these years. Everybody's favourite pastime: to psychoanalyse Bobby [Fischer]. Got so bored that [I] slunk away to souvenir shop, bought ashtray made of Icelandic lava, guaranteed to give owner magic powers of seduction."

Psychologist

By John Beloff

IF YOU ATTEMPT the impossible you cannot succeed. Koestler's career—or, should one say, his change of direction in mid-career—raises some pointed questions regarding the position of the individual in contemporary science. How much can even a polymath of genius hope nowadays to achieve in a world of specialists? What influence can the lone thinker exert on the development of scientific thought in this era of institutionalised and organised research? To put it bluntly, can the amateur survive in a community of professionals?

I think there can be no doubt that Koestler, himself, believed that he had something important and original to tell the world. He did not want to become merely the mouthpiece for other people's ideas, however much his early experience as a science-journalist may have prepared him for such a role, and however well his prodigious facility

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with words equipped him for the task. We must, accordingly, pay him the compliment of judging him in relation to the goals he set himself.

It was psychology, in the sense in which this deals with the fundamentals of human nature, that was to be the primary focus of his intellectual aspirations. And, within psychology, the principal theme that he was to make peculiarly his own was human creativity in all its multifarious guises. This was the theme of his largest work, *The Act of Creation* (1964), itself the culmination of a line of thought that he introduced with his *Insight and Outlook* (1949). It attempts to synthesise a vast number of psychological observations on the basis of the single concept of "bisociation"—the coming together in the mind of the thinker of two disparate realms of thought. Indeed, the book itself exemplifies this concept since no one before Koestler had attempted to relate humour, science, and art in this way under a single rubric.

Other themes which he explored in depth included the hierarchical structure of the human mind and the hierarchical principle in nature generally, a theme which comes to the fore in his *The Ghost in the Machine* (1967) and in its sequel, *Janus* (1978). In this connection he has a great deal to say about the perils of the "self-transcending" or "integrative" tendency, that is the tendency of the individual to merge with, and identify with, the collective mind even when this means a renunciation of the personal conscience. As an ex-Communist, Koestler may be presumed to know what he was talking about at this juncture; but he carries his speculations far beyond this point and considers seriously the possibility that man is an evolutionarily flawed species—that the "paranoid streak" in man is the result of a biological failure to coordinate a stupendously inflated neo-cortex with the more primitive mammalian and reptilian brains which we have also inherited. (This latter theme, it strikes me, is somewhat alien to the rest of the Koestlerian corpus. One might even say that it represents just the kind of reductive materialism that evokes such scorn from him when castigating the Behaviourists. Moreover, its neural underpinning leans heavily on the work of the American physiologist, Paul MacLean.)

KOESTLER CONTINUED to pursue his own paths in his own unique way, but his ideas were by no means out of tune with much of what was happening in psychology, especially in the USA. There "Behaviourism", which had for so many decades dominated experimental psychology, was on its way out. Humanistic psychologies of one sort or another were now the fashion, and we find that creativity along with altered states of consciousness were among the key themes that were attract-

On the High Trapeze

Vienna

THE news of Arthur Koestler's death calls to mind of a remark which Philip Toynbee once made, in reviewing the autobiography, that sometimes one was forced to wonder "how history was able to get along without Mr Koestler. . . ." Now it will have to; and it won't be quite the same.

I met him first in London in the year 1937. Our meeting was in the Hyde Park flat of the Austrian writer Paul Frischauer, and there were rather more famous guests present at the time: the director Berthold Viertel, the satirist Robert Neumann, the Baltic Baroness Moura Budberg (once the mistress of Maxim Gorky and now of H. G. Wells). . . . But all attention was focused on the small, dynamic, aggressively-jovial young man, bursting with both physical and intellectual energy. He had just been released, after interventions by the Foreign Office and a Fleet Street newspaper (the old News Chronicle*), from a Franco death-cell in Malaga, and his account of it was just being published, entitled* Spanish Testament. *If he impressed us in London at the time (as someone remarked that evening) as "a burnt child", it was clear that here was a man who was attracted to the fire.*

Once, many years later, I was reviewing one of his books and was tempted to make the comparison with William Saroyan's "daring young man on the flying trapeze." I suppose I implied that he plunged himself into extreme situations not merely out of "public concern" but out of a private need to demonstrate courage. It was not a remark he forgave me for, and once in Alpbach (where he had a Tyrolean hillside chalet) he upbraided me angrily, although many years had passed. He remained, intellectually speaking, a writer of wellnigh universal interests, and it was perhaps inevitable that he would have to wear the badge of "Renaissance man" and be exposed to the criticism of experts on all sides. I think that he belongs to that small band of extraordinary writers whose errors are far more valuable than the small insights of lesser spirits; and I feel somehow that he would not have taken umbrage at that.

He died with the philosophical serenity of a Petronius. As in the suicide of Stefan Zweig, he was accompanied in death by his much younger wife, who was his secretary, assistant, and closest companion. He lived in an age which, as he often said, could no longer carry the great torch of faith and belief, and he urged us to make do with the candle-light of truth."

Hilde Spiel
in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

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ing the post-Behaviourist psychologists of the 1960s (especially on the West Coast). It is not surprising, therefore, that soon after the publication of *The Act of Creation* Koestler received from California an offer of a year's fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. This he duly accepted although for the second semester only. In the same year Sidney Hook at New York University wrote to him to say that he wished to nominate him for the Albert Schweitzer Chair in the Humanities but this offer Koestler declined—he had no desire to leave Europe. At all events, the academic year 1964/65 which Koestler spent in the United States was the closest he ever came to participating in academic life.

ALTHOUGH KOESTLER NOW rates an honourable mention in the textbooks of psychology, especially where these touch upon creative thinking, he was always reluctant to play the academic game, as it were. He never, to my knowledge, published in an accredited and refereed journal; he preferred, instead, to make his thoughts known to the world through his books which were, of course, widely read and were translated into many languages. In this way, although he certainly continued to arouse controversy—indeed he was himself a fearless polemicist—he was never exposed to the day-to-day criticisms of colleagues or students that go to make up the rough-and-tumble of University life. This may account for the recklessness he sometimes displayed when attacking those with whom he disagreed. Thus we find Ernest Hilgard (the distinguished American psychologist whom he met at Stanford) saying, in the course of a letter thanking Koestler for sending him a copy of *The Ghost in the Machine*, "It is interesting how your intemperate attacks on behaviorism make such anti-behaviorists as George Miller and me tend to come to the defence of our colleagues. . . ." (Iain Hamilton, *Koestler: a Biography*, 1982, p. 349.)

Koestler's most formidable critic, however, was not a psychologist but that eminent biologist, Sir Peter Medawar, whose devastating review of *The Act of Creation* appeared in *The New Statesman*. Koestler replied to it with dignity and restraint—he admired Medawar—but that clash of titans of opposing outlooks and temperaments has become legendary. One could see that Medawar had gone to school with Karl Popper in a way that Koestler, unfortunately, never had; so that there was some justification to Medawar's taunt that "Koestler seems to have no adequate grasp of the importance of *criticism* in science—above all of self-criticism, for most of scientists' wounds are self-inflicted. Nor can I remember in his book any passage suggesting observations or experiments which might qualify or refine his ideas. . . ." (*The Art of the Soluble*, 1967, p. 91.)

TO ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES Behaviourism was played out by the early 1970s; but the movement which was to replace it as the dominant orthodoxy in academic psychology was very different from anything that Koestler had envisaged or would approve. For, the new "cognitive psychology", which still holds sway, draws its inspiration from the computer and from the new science of artificial intelligence which the computer engendered. Thus, if "ratomorphic" psychology was now a thing of the past, "mechanomorphic" psychology was still very much a live issue. This change-over has recently been frankly and forcefully described by one of its leading protagonists, George Miller (in a BBC interview with Jonathan Miller). The Behaviourists' mistake, we are told, was to imagine that, in order to be scientific, it was necessary to eschew all references to an inner mental life that was, in principle, unobservable. But then, as Professor Miller goes on to explain:

> "During the Second World War technological advances occurred that made it possible to talk materialistically about much more complicated kinds of physical things. Suddenly engineers were using the mentalistic terms that soft-hearted psychologists had wanted to use but were told were unscientific. It wasn't that the engineers were trying to reduce people to materialistic objects. What happened was that the concept of what a machine could be was greatly enlarged. And that change introduced a higher level of materialism. . . ."

But Koestler would never bring himself to believe that man was ultimately a machine of any description, even a cybernetic one. And the basic reason, I would say, is that, unlike this new school of psychologists, Koestler refused to relinquish a belief in the spiritual or transcendental dimension of human personality. This aspect of Koestler may not everywhere be apparent. His discussion of such Koestlerian concepts as "holons" or "open-ended hierarchies", of "codes and matrices" or of "triggers and scanners", "arborisation and reticulation", and so on, proceeds on a severely technical plane. Nevertheless, at a deeper level, he recognised an "invisible writing", an aspect of reality that defied analysis and raised doubts about the very possibility of a comprehensive scientific psychology.

George Steiner, writing in the *Sunday Times*, was by no means the only one of Koestler's admirers who, in their obituaries, deplored

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Koestler's interest in the paranormal and treated it as an aberration of his declining years. In fact, those who knew Arthur well agree that it had been a life-long interest of his. We get hints of this in his two autobiographical volumes where we find it reinforced by the occasional mystical experiences which punctuated his eventful existence. It is not easy for someone like myself who has never been privileged to have such an experience to understand, still less evaluate, the accounts of those who have been so privileged. But it is common knowledge that such experiences may transform the outlook of those who undergo them; and so it was with Koestler. Nevertheless he was reticent about such matters. No doubt, having taken on the scientific establishment single-handedly, he was anxious to avoid the added handicap of being branded an occultist or an irrationalist.

He joined the Society for Psychical Research in 1952; but he preferred to remain in the background, and never wished to accept the presidency. Hence, apart from an occasional article in which he spoke encouragingly about parapsychologists or rallied to the defence of J. B. Rhine, it was not until he published his *The Roots of Coincidence* in 1972 that the full extent of his commitment to the field became apparent to the general public; and he followed this, the next year, with *The Challenge of Chance* (of which he was part author). Neither volume, it is true, was a major work even if they are revealing of his deeper concerns.

My impression is that he never succeeded in conceptualising these anomalous phenomena in a way that satisfied him or enabled him to relate them to his general position in psychology. He wavers between two different approaches which were not strictly compatible with one another. On the one hand, he was among the first to see the potentialities of relating parapsychology to quantum theory in physics, if only so that "the seemingly fantastic proportions of parapsychology appear less preposterous in the light of the truly fantastic concepts of modern physics."[1] Yet, at the same time, he was, like the hero of his *Case of the Midwife Toad* (1971) Paul Kammerer (the unorthodox Austrian biologist) fascinated by coincidences to which all his life he seems to have been specially prone. Following C. G. Jung, he took up the suggestion that parapsychological phenomena, at any rate of the spontaneous kind, reflect an "a-causal" principle in nature. Jung called it the principle of "synchronicity", Koestler preferred to talk of "confluent events" but the idea was that this would avoid having to posit a non-physical or "magical" type of causation. Both these approaches have since become conspicuous features of the parapsychological literature (especially the former since there is not much that one can do with the Jungian concept of synchronicity, so far at least as research is concerned).

It is typical of Koestler's boldness, not to say foolhardiness, that the one phenomenon he chose as a research topic should be among the rarest in the parapsychologist's inventory, namely self-levitation. So far as I know, the last case of a full-blown self-levitation that needs to be taken seriously was that of the Austrian medium, Rudi Schneider, in the 1920s. Koestler was not, of course, anticipating full-blown levitations; his idea was rather that it might be possible to register a sudden paranormal loss of weight while the subject was in a special state of mind, or even during sleep. Provision was made for this in the basement of his house in Montpelier Square; but no definite evidence has so far been forthcoming although "Project Daedalus" (as Koestler dubbed it) is now continuing under the direction of the physicist, Professor John Hasted.

Koestler waged a lifetime's struggle with orthodoxy of every kind but perhaps his most cunning plan for upsetting academic orthodoxy is one that has still to be realised posthumously. For it transpired that, in his Will, he had bequeathed almost his entire estate to the endowment of a "Chair of Parapsychology at a university in the United Kingdom." It so happens that it has now become my responsibility, as an executor, to find a British university or college that is not afraid to admit Koestler's Trojan horse into its citadel!

[1] See his "The Perversity of Physics" in *The Roots of Coincidence*, (1972), p. 78. It was Koestler who suggested to the Parapsychology Foundation of New York the theme for its 1974 international conference in Geneva. The proceedings volume was published under the title *Quantum Physics and Parapsychology* (ed. L. Oteri, Parapsychology Foundation, 1975).

Crusader

By David Astor

I first met Arthur Koestler in Cyril Connolly's flat, very soon after the fall of France. Those were dramatic, highly-charged days; yet everyone at that party looked easy-going beside the small, intense figure, who was moving about at the centre of the room. He was in battle-dress, and his hair was cut short. And he seemed to radiate a heightened liveliness and sense of reality.

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Koestler's arrival in our anxious mid-War London was a great stimulant. Here he was, full of confidence and vigour—but coming, unbelievably, from a French concentration camp, after his earlier sentence of death in a Spanish jail. He had, of course, been active against the fascists for years. And, lately, he had demythologised the mighty Soviets, then Hitler's partners, in *Darkness at Noon*.

At that moment, Koestler was the embodiment of an uncompromised, unafraid, international idealism. This small, passionate man, with his excruciating accent, his self-mockery, and his devotion to his political friends in Europe whom he called "the Scum of the Earth", seemed almost as miraculous an apparition, at a different part of the political spectrum, as Churchill himself.

Apart from an unforgettable lobbying of the American Embassy with him for a far greater admission of Jewish refugees into the Americas, my chief connection with Arthur during the War years was necessarily personal, rather than actively political. We shared, for instance, a great affection for George Orwell, then still little-known. Arthur venerated Orwell's Spanish Civil War book and his critical essays as he admired the work of few others.

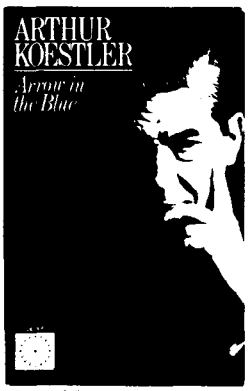
AFTER THE WAR, Arthur saw possibilities in the Sunday papers. By far his most successful use of *The Observer* was in the campaign of 1954 for the abolition of Capital Punishment. This measure had, of course, long been on the agenda of social reformers like Victor Gollancz and Gerald Gardiner. But it was Arthur who became its most original and powerful advocate.

He set about writing nothing less than a history of the controversy in this country over hanging, during the previous 150 years. This required a statistical analysis of all those executed—if reasoned evidence was to be produced on whether hanging was, or was not, likely to deter those who commit murder. To carry out this labour, Arthur needed help, which he found in an alliance with the staff of *The Observer*—particularly in the paper's then-legal correspondent, Louis Blom-Cooper.

Soon, Arthur's scientific-polemical work—ultimately to be a book—started appearing in brilliant weekly articles. And soon the people he was attacking began to hit back.

At that time, the formidable Lord Goddard, a strong believer in Capital Punishment, was the Lord Chief Justice; and the Lord Chancellor was Lord Jowitt. These two dignitaries dissected and dismissed Koestler's arguments in House of Lords debates, making him appear pitiably ill-informed. But their admonition included one plain historical error: they mistook a certain early Victorian re-

The Koestler Saga



THE *family tree of the Koestlers starts with my grandfather Leopold and ends with me.*

Leopold X fled during the Crimean War from Russia across the Carpathian mountains to Hungary. I have to call him **"X"** *because Koestler was not his real name, and he never disclosed his real name to anybody, not even to his children. All that is known about him is that he arrived in the good town of Miskolcz, Hungary, some time in the eighteen-sixties, and that somehow he assumed there the name of Koestler, Köstler, Kestler or Keszler—all of which figure on various documents.*

For the sake of accuracy I ought to mention that my father wrote his name "Köstler." So did I; until I bought my first portable typewriter which had no "ö" on its keyboard. So I had to spell it "Koestler", which looks much nicer, and which I have stuck to ever since.

MY MOTHER **never ceased to regard the Magyars as a nation of barbarians, and though she lived for nearly half a century in Budapest, refused to learn Hungarian properly. This proved to be a blessing where my own future was concerned, for I was brought up bilingually, talking Hungarian at school and German at home. That I was called "Arthur", a name I always loathed and could never pronounce as I can't roll my "r's", was due to similar reasons: my mother chose the name because it sounded outlandish and had no Hungarian derivative or equivalent. Her contempt for the Hungarians made her life a kind of exile, without friends or social contacts; in consequence, I grew up without playmates. I was an only child and a lonely child; precocious, neurotic, admired for my brains and detested for my character by teachers and schoolfellows alike.**

AS I HAVE SAID, *I am the last of the short line of Koestlers; there is no other male issue on this family tree, and with the present writer's death, which according to a Gypsy prediction will be unexpected and violent, the Koestler, or Köstler, or Kestler, or Kesztler saga will come to a fitting end.*

A.K.

in *Arrow in The Blue*

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former, Romilly, for a judge, thereby putting all his splendid efforts at reform to the credit of the judiciary. Next Sunday, Koestler was not only commenting on their "amazing ignorance": he was parodying their error in a way that made them look ridiculous.

Later, the present Lord Hailsham alleged a lack of integrity in Koestler's apparent misquotation of a Home Office directive: Hailsham recommended that the matter be brought to the attention of the Press Council. For a moment, Arthur seemed to have been seriously damaged—but in his next Sunday's article, he counter-attacked so effectively that a successful appeal was made to the Press Council *against* Lord Hailsham.

IN THIS hard-hitting campaign, un-English in its disregard of the traditional immunity from debate of the judges, Koestler had the satisfaction of seeing his serious arguments and his powerful evidence gradually convince most of the Press and most of Parliament. He had won many disputations in his life. This was the only time that he won a major social victory.

Incidentally, the stress of this campaign did not stop him exercising his characteristic curiosity. Although it had nothing to do with the campaign, Arthur asked *The Observer*'s readers the fascinating question why Britain should have been the most liberal of European countries in the late 18th and early 19th century—and yet have continued the barbaric custom of public hangings. He offered his own explanation. All other European countries had a standing army—used partly for keeping domestic law and order. But, ever since England's Civil War, Parliament had preferred to have a substantial navy—remembering that a standing army might, conceivably, be used to challenge Parliament's supremacy.

How, then, was law and order enforced in Britain—a country troubled at that time by the special disturbances of the Industrial Revolution? Koestler suggested that it was, perhaps, precisely the public hangings (inflicted for all sorts of offences) that were the alternative to a standing army. In other words, exemplary hanging may have been an accidental part of Britain's comparatively liberal system of Parliamentary government of that time!

AFTER THE Abolition campaign, Arthur used to say "What will be our next crusade?" Our next, and last, was his wholly original idea of trying to persuade the Home Office to allow those in prison to go in for an annual literary and painting competition, for which he would give the cash prizes.

Arthur went about the approach to the Home Office with his usual elaborate care for detail. He persuaded his distinguished literary agent, A. D. Peters, to undertake the negotiations with Whitehall. That was some twenty years ago. Today, the Koestler—or "Kostler"—Awards, as they have now been Anglicised, have become a regular and valued part of prison life, up and down this country.

He received the greatest satisfaction from this Awards Scheme. And it is, I think, touching that a man in some ways as apparently egotistical as Arthur should have felt such satisfaction from relieving the mental strains of others. It is, also, characteristic that those he so much wanted to honour with his Awards were the least respected section of the community.

He probably had greater difficulty in relieving his own mental strains. We all knew his tensions and his occasional outbursts. It was as if he had a "little-boy" side to his nature, which was not always under control and which might break out in sudden anger. In some ways his most endearing side, it was the surprising companion of his Leonardo-like *other* side.

WHETHER DESPITE, or perhaps because of, his strong human feelings, Arthur was surely a great man. He was great in intellect and imagination, and great in moral courage. I have had the opportunity to know other remarkable and admirable men, like Shaw, Tawney, Weizmann, O'Casey. For what my opinion is worth, Arthur Koestler will hold a place in the front rank of men like these—those who have saved our century from disgrace.

"Angel"

By Mary Benson

CYNTHIA KOESTLER was born in Pretoria in 1927. Her father, Dr Jefferies, was a surgeon who had emigrated to South Africa from Ireland. Our families were friends, and I remember Cynthia as an extremely pretty child. Her weekly treat was the arrival of the comics from England—each Thursday her father would bring them home and Cynthia couldn't wait to plunge into the latest adventures of Tiger Tim and Pip, Squeak and Wilfred. Though she had a younger sister, she already had a very private inner life. She adored her father and was immensely proud of him; she was shattered by his suicide. She was about 13 years old, and it was undoubtedly through her suffering then that she was imbued with an exceptional capacity for love and compassion.

She found solace in reading and, after she had trained as a secretary, her ambition was to work for

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a writer. Aged 22, and living with her mother in Paris, she answered an advertisement in the *Herald Tribune:* "AUTHOR SEEKS PART-TIME SECRETARY." She applied and got the job. The author of course was Arthur Koestler.

Twice a week she set out eagerly by Métro and train for Koestler's house on the Seine, and he dictated letters or chapters for a novel, *The Age of Longing*. Cynthia was utterly fascinated by him, by his wife Mamaine, and their fabulous world with its stream of visitors from all over Europe. Although she was painfully shy, her happiness must have quickly endeared her to the Koestlers. Besides, she was an efficient secretary and Arthur—intensely demanding with his manifold interests—found her easy to work with.

In the autumn of 1950 he left for New York. That was when I first met him and, like so many of his friends, was drawn in to assist in one of his causes, the Fund to help exiled intellectuals.

Before long he sent for Cynthia who was overjoyed to join him and Mamaine on the island he had bought in the Delaware River. He began dictating his autobiography—Cynthia found it spellbinding. She was never to forget one particularly horrifying event: Arthur, aged five, arms and legs strapped to a chair, helpless, choking and coughing blood as his tonsils were removed without an anaesthetic.

In those months and during further periods of working for him in London, Cynthia experienced the full range of Arthur's moods. Along with his superhuman energy and brilliance, his humanity and ironic sense of humour, there was the dark demonic side to his nature when the pendulum swung abruptly into despair and violent depression, followed by the drinking and the terrifying tempers. But her love was unconditional, and love for him embraced love for Mamaine.

HIS MARRIAGE to Mamaine was breaking up though they remained close friends. He urged Cynthia to lead her own life, and in 1953 she married and moved to New York; the marriage was short-lived. In America she got a job with Ely Culbertson—he was using the fortune he had made as a champion bridge player to work for peace and a UN world

Suicide of a Poet

ATTILA JOZSEF: *though in his native Hungary Attila Jozsef is posthumously regarded as the greatest poet the nation has produced, his name is still virtually unknown in the West.*

Attila Jozsef committed suicide at the age of 32; both his work and his personal fate were a terrifying symbol of our time. He was a contemporary Villon, whose life and poetry revolved around the two treacherous poles of this age, Marx and Freud, and who died a victim of both.

Attila was born in 1905, the son of a day-labourer and of a charwoman. His father disappeared when he was three, and until his seventh year Attila was brought up in an orphanage. He earned his living while at school as a movie-usher, newsboy and night-waiter; and at college as a railway porter, Danube sailor, dock-worker, office-cleaner and private tutor.

HIS FIRST POEMS **were published in the leading Hungarian literary magazine,** *Nyugat* **("Occident") when he was sixteen. One year later, in 1922,** *Nyugat* **printed his poem "Innocent Song" which caused a nation-wide scandal, and his expulsion from the University of Szeged. "Innocent Song" was acclaimed as a kind of manifesto of the Central European post-war generation. (I am indebted to Laurie Lee for his kind and expert help in preparing the translations.)**

Innocent Song

I have no God, I have no King,
my mother never wore a ring,
I have no crib or funeral cover,
I give no kiss, I take no lover.

For three days I have chewed my thumb
for want of either crust or crumb.
Though I am twenty, strong and hale—
my twenty years are up for sale.

Should there be none who wish to buy
The Devil's free to have a try;
then shall I use my commonsense
and rob and kill in innocence.

Till, on a rope, they hang me high,
and in the blessed earth I lie—
and lush and poisoned grasses start
rank from my pure and simple heart.

WHEN I MET *Attila in 1933, we were both twenty-seven. He was of pure-bred Magyar, rural stock: of medium height, lean, sparse, sinewy, he carried his body like a regimental sergeant-major. He had a narrow face with a high forehead, calm brown eyes, and calm, regular features to which a certain dash and enterprise was added by a trim moustache with pointed ends. It was a handsome and manly, but quite unremarkable face that could have been a ladies' hairdresser's; nothing in its unruffled appearance suggested that its owner had spent several months in a mental hospital, suffering from delusions, and was heading for the final break-up.*

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force. Mamaine's death a year later left Arthur distraught. Cynthia wrote to comfort him. He was floundering in a series of love affairs; she herself was caught up in an unhappy affair. As soon as she returned to London for a family holiday in 1955, he swept her into the Campaign against Capital Punishment.

Manic weeks in a summer heat-wave during which Arthur dictated *Reflections on Hanging*, and they spent long hours in the Press Association office, emerging dazed and sickened after reading case histories of men and women who had been hanged—Arthur with indelible memories of the death cell in Spain; Cynthia with that stark image of the five-year-old Arthur, helplessly choking.

She returned to her life in New York, but within a month Arthur had cabled, asking her to come back. Her overriding feeling was how fortunate she was to share his life; it was not in her nature to realise how fortunate *he* was to have her.

He was deep into his study of Kepler, but it was not all hard work. In the summer they went canoeing on the Dordogne. Arthur addressed Cynthia—who was second paddle and map-reader—as "Crew." Days on the river, then a comfortable hotel . . . as he put it, "Combining the virtuous satisfaction of sporting achievement with a guilt-free guzzle in the evening."

SO THEIR PARTNERSHIP was established. She described it with typical good humour in the Koestler *Festschrift*. Because he loved entertaining, she conquered shyness—she was a thoughtful hostess and a sophisticated cook. Arthur called her Angel—not just a word sugaring the pill of his demands, but a beloved angelic influence; and their friends observed his mellowing.

Early every morning she laid a foundation of happiness to her day; in the country or in Hyde Park, she walked the dogs which she adored. This world was hers, and the garden at Denston too, where she loved to work from spring to autumn. Through the years of his illness, their mutual courage and her tender patience were phenomenal. Whatever the pain or indignity, Arthur refused to give way to self-pity. In those dark days, his jokes, his chuckles, his enjoyment of small pleasures, gave a sense of triumph. At Denston and in London, Scrabble—they were passionate players, Cynthia

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At the time of our friendship he was, in fact, quite normal except for certain eccentricities and intellectual obsessions. Dominant among these were psychoanalysis and Hegelian-Marxist dialectics. Attila had joined the Hungarian underground Communist movement in the late '20s, and had been expelled for Trotskyist leanings in 1930 or '31. But he had remained a true proletarian and a true revolutionary, who hated the "Bonapartism" of Stalin with a Jacobin passion.

ATTILA *had repeatedly tried to kill himself, the first time at the age of nine, when he swallowed a bar of starch in the belief that it was poison. At fourteen or fifteen, he lay down on the railway track to get himself run over by a goods train which passed through the village every day at a given hour. Time went on, but the train did not come. In the end Attila got up and started walking along the rails to meet it. He then discovered the reason why the train was late: it had killed another person a mile farther up the line. "Somebody else has died for me", he used to say afterwards.*

From then on trains, in particular goods trains, became another of Attila's obsessions. They keep roaring through his poems, as the ocean "sick of prey, yet howling on for more" does through Shelley's: until finally they got their prey. In 1937 he spent a few weeks in a mental home. Then, as his condition seemed to have improved, he was handed over into the care of his sisters, who were living in a small village on Lake Balaton. One evening in November, he ambled down to the railway station where a goods train was standing, bound for Budapest. As he was approaching the station, the train slowly began to move. He broke into a run, squeezed through under the lowered barrier, knelt down at the track, and, as the train was gathering speed, laid his right arm in between two carriages on the rail. The arm was later found, cleanly severed and thrown at some distance from the mangled body.

A few days after Attila's death, his family found in his drawer a shirt from which the right sleeve had been cut off with scissors. His guilt-complex had apparently inspired him with the idea that he must have his right arm cut off; and when that was done the train, howling for more, had drawn the rest of the body under the wheels. His death was, fittingly, announced to his sisters by the giggling and spluttering village idiot.

THE **Hungarian Communist Party, which had excommunicated Attila Jozsef in his lifetime, canonised him after his death. Had he been still alive when Hungary came under Russian rule, he would have shared the fate of all my other friends; so it is just as well that he chose the goods train. If he could come back for an hour, he would twirl his moustache and launch into a dissertation on the proper dialectical timing of one's death.**

A.K.

in *The Invisible Writing*

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every bit as good as Arthur. In our game on 20 February, though he was losing heavily, Arthur thought long over some small move. Then came the self-mocking grin as he said, "Even at this hopeless stage, how strong the competitive spirit is!"

Ten days later I came across a report about "a dolphin in California which spoke with a Hungarian accent"—Arthur had once urged me to study and write about dolphins, so I telephoned Montpelier Square to share the joke with him and Cynthia. They had died the night before.

Hungarian

By George Mikes

I WAS Arthur Koestler's Hungarian friend. I do not mean that I was a friend who happened to be Hungarian: I mean I fulfilled a function: he needed Hungarian friends. Indeed, since the sad death of Paul Ignotus (political prisoner in Budapest, refugee in London) I was his one and only Hungarian friend.

I do not want to be misunderstood. He would not put up with people he was not, at least moderately, fond of; he did not select his friends according to his needs. Yet he thought in categories; he had a logical and orderly mind, and life had its departments. And so it worked out that he had scientific, sociological, parapsychological (etc.) friends, and I was happy to be chosen to fill the Hungarian slot.

It was this common bond that brought us together in the first place. In the autumn of 1952, I wrote a long article on the fine Hungarian poet Endre Ady, for *The Times Literary Supplement*. Soon after its appearance, Alan Pryce-Jones, the editor, got in touch with me to ask my permission for lifting the *TLS* "rule of anonymity" and giving my name to Arthur Koestler who, he said, was keen to meet the author of the piece. I replied that anonymity was *his* rule, not mine, and of course I would be delighted to meet Mr Koestler.

I rang him up. We talked English on the phone. When I suggested that I should go and see him I encountered, for the first time, that astonishing personal modesty of the man who had the reputation (not exactly unfounded) of being so querulous and arrogant. He said: "Why should you bother to come to me—when I want something from you?" I told him that, nevertheless, I would be pleased to call in on him, and I did.

I wondered what on earth he could possibly want. In his autobiography he described going to meet Sigmund Freud and Thomas Mann, two of his heroes, and I felt more or less the same emotions as I drove to his place in Montpelier Square.

When I arrived, we started talking in our mother tongue. His Hungarian was accentless but halting, and he kept searching for words. "You must forgive me", he said, "but I haven't spoken Hungarian for some eight years. . . ."

I suggested that we should speak English if that would be easier for him. A broad grin was the answer: "Mikes! You and I should sit here on the fourth floor in Knightsbridge—and *you and I* should speak *English*? Ridiculous!" At that moment I enclosed him in my heart and he never left that place.

No, he never left that place, but I must qualify that statement. All journalists develop a healthy resistance to famous names and great (or so-called great) men, and engender a kind of "so what?" or "and-who-the-hell-do-you-think-you-are?" attitude against prime ministers, kings, and celebrated artists. I am no exception; I am not easily impressed. But in Arthur's case I was quite happy to let my defences collapse. In the subsequent years we teased each other, argued, quarrelled, played games, told old stories and newsy anecdotes, and while I felt at home in his house and relaxed in his company, I could not forget for long periods that my little Hungarian friend was a European giant, one of the most formidable writers and intellects of the epoch.

HE TOLD ME during that first visit that he was working on the second volume of his autobiography, *The Invisible Writing*, in which he described his trip to Budapest in 1933. During that visit he became friendly with Attila József, a poet of much genius, and he wanted to get hold of a publishable photograph of Attila. In those days, at the height of the Rákosi terror, it was impossible to do the simple thing and write to Budapest, asking for a picture of one of Hungary's great poets. So he asked me if I could possibly help him. I could. I happened to have a picture of an oil portrait of Attila, painted by Vincent Korda in Paris. Our discussion led to a curious literary venture. Koestler told me that he had translated a few poems by Attila József and wondered if I would be tempted to do the same. For a month or two we both neglected all other duties and were madly busy translating Hungarian poems into English. Arthur got quite excited about the Attila project. Sometimes—at all other times almost pathologically reticent in speaking of work-in-progress—he phoned me up three times a day, having hit on a phrase or a line or two with which he was especially pleased. "Listen to this! . . ." A

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few of these translated poems appeared in *The Invisible Writing*, polished up by Laurie Lee.

OUR NEXT Hungarian adventure was the Revolution of 1956. Some time after midnight on the 23rd October, he rang me up and told me that he was near Eaton Place with another Hungarian friend, and I should join them without delay. He explained that they had collected a few bricks and we, the three of us, would proceed to throw them through the windows of the Hungarian Legation. Arthur was an enthusiast and an activist, never content to watch great events happen: he had to take part. That's what he did as a Zionist in the Middle East, as a Communist in Siberia, and now, for an historic moment, he was becoming a Hungarian patriot once again. I, on the other hand, am not very excitable; indeed I am quiet to the point of being indolent. So instead of jumping out of bed, dressing, and rushing out, I asked him what this project of brick-throwing was supposed to be in aid of. "To draw attention to events in Hungary!" I replied that as the front pages of all newspapers were full of events in Hungary, and television and radio hardly mentioned any other subject, I did not quite see the need of "drawing attention" to the Budapest uprising. "To hell with your moderation!" he shouted, and slammed the receiver down. I like to think Arthur and his friend gave up the midnight idea. In any event, next morning one could read in the newspapers that some thirteen bricks had been thrown through the windows of the Legation in Eaton Place.

When I went to see him that next morning we decided, more properly, to organise a large public meeting. A number of distinguished persons spoke to a huge crowd, but everyone wanted to hear Koestler. He declined to speak; he had just recently declared in one of his books that "Cassandra has gone hoarse" and that he would never again write or speak of political matters.

HE LOVED TALKING Hungarian, a language he had partly forgotten but partly still knew very well. A word or phrase often escaped him, and the vague synonyms I produced simply would not do. He had to have the exact word (however long it might have taken to hit upon it). He also scanned the Hungarian literary papers for poems, but, alas, failed to discover a new Attila József. He even followed, after a fashion, Hungarian football. He was annoyed when Cynthia and I watched Wimbledon on television—an intelligent man could follow football but to watch tennis was just a sheer waste of time. Before the classic England–Hungary match in the mid-1950s, he asked me which side I would support. "I am a *British* subject now", I told him. "I shall support England!" He shook his head: "Patriotism is one thing—football loyalties another." How right he was. I went to watch that match with the London cartoonist Vicky, and we were nearly thrown out of the press box because after the first Hungarian goal (some 40 seconds or so after the kick-off) we stood up and cheered. One does not applaud in the English press box; and most certainly not the national enemy.

Arthur's books appeared in some thirty languages but not in Hungarian. This pained him. I myself submitted *The Sleepwalkers* to a Budapest publisher in 1979, but the book was returned to me a few months later, with a note that "the economic climate" made publication impossible. Last year *Darkness at Noon* did appear at last in Hungarian, published by an *émigré* firm; but this came too late to give him any real joy. His books had been burnt by the Nazis then by the Russians; and perhaps the greatest prose-writer his country has ever produced has never been published in Hungary.

But I do not want to conclude on this melancholy note. I am sure he would appreciate a smile as a final tribute; so I should like to recall one of his remarks which amused me so very much. A gushing American lady dropped in on us for a drink one evening, and when she repeated for the fifth time how honoured and absolutely overwhelmed she was to be in the presence of the great man, Arthur told her: "My dear young lady, to love a writer and and then to meet the writer—isn't it rather like loving goose-liver and then meeting the goose?..." I met and came to know the goose well, and still love goose-liver.

A FINAL NOTE about this "To hell with moderation." Harold Harris, his friend, publisher and literary executor, told me at the crematorium service at Mortlake that he had found several Koestler notebooks, containing aphorisms, observations, passing thoughts. Koestler had made only one entry in 1983. It read: "Thou shalt not carry moderation to excess." This was the last literary note he made in his life.

(Further contributions—among others, the memoirs of Manès Sperber, Leo Valiani, Hyam Maccoby, Brian Inglis, John Wain—will appear in the September-October issue of ENCOUNTER, *published on 5 September.)*

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David Sweetman

An Adopted Life

The cantonment's hazy
clapboard beehives
and the Sikhs drone-headed
in military turbans

watching my natural father,
English shorts limp
as the airless
afternoon flag,

saluting me, broad
open-palmed
as if slapping away
a troublesome Indian insect.

A sickbed photo to ease
those toyless postwar days
when a pillow-plume restored
Europe's dead courts. *The stars*,

said the Kaiser,
are medals awarded to God
for favours. And anything
was possible

when the Benares
medicine tray was rimmed
with hated Swastikas
etched in brass, light

as scratches on a cornfield
where I watched
a poppy's wounds embrace
the khaki bees

that snuffled in its
dreaming tears and felt
the symbolism of remembrance
defeating me. The angel

on our memorial
brandished her sword,
a madcap nanny
whipping her charges to bed,

in storybook and comic
two wars merged

and I imagined
a conscript's leggings

spreading upwards
until mummified
he rose from mud
to confuse history.

The chapel plaque
had sharper inscriptions
added later, after father
was brought back, dying

almost an afterthought,
eardrums split
on a shore-battery,
a torrent

flushing each seared
aural snail
as I was conceived
just months before.

Recently my new,
my only real father
reminiscing about
my childhood pneumonia

a decade before
tetracycline, told how going
reluctantly to work he saw
the overblown wax poppies

blossoming on his Wolseley
and was overwhelmed
by the thought of my dying
in his charge. He said

he broke down
but I elect to see him
reticently covering his face,
raising a hand

in broad, open-palmed salute
to the mosquito memory
that carries our private,
chosen bloodline.

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Michael Charlton

On the Origins of the Cold War

The Eagle & the Small Birds

2. The Triumph of the Commissar

"The eagle should permit the small birds to sing, and care not wherefore they sang."

CHURCHILL *to* STALIN, *at Yalta (4 February 1945)*

WITHIN A MONTH of his return from the Yalta Conference, President Roosevelt's euphoric vanity that, after the War, he would be successful in persuading Stalin into the intimate collaboration for which Roosevelt longed, was quickly drained away.

On 24 March 1945, while he was at lunch in the White House, the President was handed a cable from Averell Harriman, his Ambassador to Stalin in Moscow. Roosevelt read it with mounting anger and agitation, then said loudly, "Averell is right. We can't do business with Stalin. He's broken all the promises he made at Yalta." In his final communications to the Soviet leader the President wrote of his feelings of "bitter resentment" and of Stalin's "vile misrepresentations." A week later Roosevelt was dead.

Over the next three years, "the Spirit of Yalta" was extinguished in the confirmation of the most pessimistic forecasts of how Stalin would choose to interpret those famously ambiguous accords. As the Soviet Commissar took over from the Nazi *Gauleiter* in command of the capitals of Central Europe, the West's uneasy hopes at Yalta—that if the new men fulfilled Stalin's demand for governments "friendly" to the Soviet Union they could also pose as patriotic, independent leaders—proved illusory.

In these years both the nature and the exercise of Soviet power created fundamental resentments, which must be seen as fatal to reconciling the peoples concerned to the long-term continuation of Russian domination.

By 1948, Czechoslovakia—a parliamentary democracy since World War I—had been subverted. By 1949, a shuffling procession of tormented "enemies of the people" crowded the courtrooms of Eastern Europe. The "new purges" culminated in the "Show Trials"—ceremonies conforming to the Moscow precedent, which demanded blood sacrifices. Among the victims was a Czech Communist, Eugen Loebl.

LOEBL: "I was told that, apart from Slansky, nobody would be sentenced to death. And I think the interrogators believed that as well. As a matter of fact, when I wasn't sentenced to death, but others were, I envied them—how better off they are. I was still in solitary confinement: they don't suffer any more. I was interested in whether my ideas of the trial were right. One, that it is a kind of Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia, without the Army. And the other, whether my analysis is right that it was anti-Semitic. You see, once one is in solitary confinement one lives in a world of ideas. The ideas are important because you don't live with anything else. I was more interested in following what they said—whether it was exactly in contradiction or not. So the actual sentence, the death sentence (I was prepared either for life or for death), is really better than to be sentenced to life under those conditions."

— I have here the words of the Prosecutor summing up at the trial.

"I demand the death sentence for all the accused. Let your verdicts become an iron fist, without the slightest pity. Let it be a fire which burns out the roots of this shameful abscess of treason. Let it be a bell ringing through the whole of our beautiful country, for new victories on the march to the sunshine of Socialism."

Do you remember that?

LOEBL: "I remember that, and on top of it all there was fantastic applause. It took three years, from the beginning of my imprisonment to the trial, so to be treated that I confessed to being a traitor. And

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then, I knew at that time that Socialism—what they think is Socialism—is an evil. I should have fought against it, but I did not."

THE SHOW TRIALS were the culmination of the disciplined ruthlessness with which, step by step, as opportunity afforded, Stalin imposed his power on Eastern Europe after Yalta. It stood revealed as a jealous power resting on the elimination of all other rivalries, connections, and influences. These ceremonies of confession falsely obtained by fear and physical coercion, purges and trials, served the final consolidation of Stalin's empire. Another Communist who, like Eugen Loebl, was made a victim of that ambition and a means to its end was a Hungarian, Bela Szasz.

SZASZ: "Then I was brought to the chief of the Russian Secret Police, which operated in conjunction with the Hungarian Secret Police. That was Major-General Belkin. He was chief in East Europe of the Russian Secret Police."

—Over the whole area?

SZASZ: "For the whole area, yes. He directed this show trial in Hungary. He also directed the show trials in Czechoslovakia, in Bulgaria, in Albania, and so on. . . ."

—Can you see him now, as you talk to me?

SZASZ: "Oh very, very well. Yes. He was a rather small, fat man with a big nose (a big red nose which showed that he was a drunkard). And he smoked American cigarettes, which he once offered me. The Russians when they questioned me (because they questioned me as well) told me, We are here from the Russian Communist Party, and our sister Party, the Hungarian Communist Party, asked us to intervene in this trial, so now tell the truth and nothing but the truth. And through an interpreter they questioned me for very long—for about a week, every day eight, nine, ten hours. And meanwhile, Belkin came in. He wore a tunic made from a fabric which normally women would wear, a silver-grey, shiny tunic. He went to my interpreter and to the Russian colonel who was questioning me, and asked how it was going. And in the moment when he entered the room, the Russian colonel, who spoke German, shouted at me in German: 'Stand up! Stand up! Stand up!'

I stood up. And when he went, then the Russian colonel said, 'You know who this was?' I said, 'No.' 'He is a much, much greater man than your governor Horthy was! Because he is not only Governor of Hungary, like Horthy was, but he is governor of Austria and of Romania and of Yugoslavia and of Czechoslovakia and of Albania. Because you know Comrade Belkin is the Chief of the Secret Police for East Europe.'

So that was the Governor. I had this very unpleasant interview with the Governor before the show trial started."

THE SECRET POLICE, who had their apotheosis in the Show Trials and who followed in the wake of the Red Army, proved not just ancillary to the establishment of Communist power but were indispensable to it. We have Stalin's own word for that. Today we know that as the Red Army rolled westwards into the uncharted ambiguities of Yalta early in 1945, Stalin made what has become a celebrated remark to the Yugoslav Communist leader, Milovan Djilas.

> "This war is not as other wars. Whoever occupies a territory in this war imposes his own system as far as his Army can reach."

In contrast, the Americans set their faces determinedly against military operations for political objectives. With Poland already a lost cause from the Western viewpoint by early 1945, Churchill urged upon the Americans the need for an Allied advance into Central Europe. Pointing out that although it had been designated a Soviet sphere of military operations there was no political agreement with Moscow over Czechoslovakia, he pressed the Americans to liberate Prague while their armies stood poised to enter it. Despite Churchill's bitter protests, the Allied commander, General Eisenhower, replied for Washington, "Why should we endanger the life of a single American or Briton to capture areas which we will soon be handing over to the Russians?"

This decision effectively put Czechoslovakia into Russia's exclusive sphere of influence. The political impact it made in the democratic Republic called into existence under Jan Masaryk as President after World War I, in accordance with the principles of President Woodrow Wilson, was immediate and powerful. It was experienced at first hand by Ivo Duchacek, a Czech Foreign Ministry official with the Government-in-Exile in London, who was made liaison officer to the American Third Army under General Patton, then advancing on Prague.

DUCHACEK: "I think we were all prisoners of the general atmosphere during World War II. If Roosevelt and Churchill could cooperate with Stalin the murderer, the purger, with a system against which the British Government and Churchill had preached a crusade in 1920, who were we Czechs to tell Roosevelt and Churchill that this was a wrong calculation? The atmosphere was, I think, that the War had done something to the

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Soviet Union and to the Communist Party, and that what we would be facing in 1945 would not be the Communist Party of the Purges but the Communist Party which ran what they called the Great Patriotic War, a nationalised communism, the 'Russian way', with the 'Czech way' becoming part of the national tradition. To put it very briefly, we thought that the Communist Party of 1945, or whenever the War would end (we did not know when it would end) would be a somewhat more disagreeable Social Democratic Party of 1920. I do not try to shift the blame from the Czechs to England or France or the United States, but I would like to place it in the context of illusions which were not ours alone."

—How important a factor was the perception held by the Czech people and politicians of the whole Western position over Czechoslovakia, at the time when the Allied armies, only a few miles from Prague, were being urged by Churchill to take Prague, but the Americans were refusing to support it?

DUCHACEK: "There was, number one, a kind of general attitude about the West which was shattered by Munich in 1938."

—"A far-away country of which we know nothing?"

DUCHACEK: "That's right. Chamberlain's words were sort of floating above the Czechs. Now I think the Churchill period, plus the Czechoslovak broadcasts from the BBC, changed that picture. Great Britain was much more part of Czech thinking in 1945 that at any time before in Czech history. However, then comes 1945—and Churchill is gone. Attlee, from the point of view of the Czechs a nondescript person, appearing in the middle of the Potsdam Conference, therefore an unknown. The United States—we are discussing 1945—also unreliable, a chivalrous knight who comes to save Europe usually five minutes after midnight, not even before midnight."

—Take one particular episode. The withdrawal by Eisenhower of the American armies from in front of Prague at the request of the Russians.

DUCHACEK: "Well, even before that—this is very personal, but I think you might be interested because this is not a story which I think was told. In 1944 the Soviet Army reached the Czechoslovak boundary. We immediately offered the Soviet government to negotiate a treaty for the administration of the liberated territories—a kind of technical treaty which the UK and the USA had with other Western allies. That is, what happens after the country is liberated, what is the rate of exchange between the local and the imported currency, at what time the civil authorities take over. We had this treaty, I think, just after Easter 1944.

I remember at that time I was in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was located in London in George Street. I went to the American Chargé d'Affaires, and asked him whether we could not also have such a treaty when the American and British Army would come to Eastern Europe. The answer from both allies—we also asked the British Government—was: There is no need to make any treaty on the administration of the liberated territories of Czechoslovakia, because the Western Armies would never come there. 'This is not our zone of operations.' For us, this information was additional proof that the West was not going to be part of Central European destinies. A well-wisher —but not influential, not interested in Eastern Europe.

Then, however, comes early 1945 when General Patton, after his astonishing sweep down through southern Germany, suddenly liberated a very small portion of Western Bohemia. So there I go again to the American Embassy appointed to the Allied Governments, not to the Court of St James's, and I asked, Well, how come? You told me you would never be there! So what will be the rate of exchange between the US dollar and the Czech crown, and so on. The answer was that there were despatches going back and forth between Washington and London. The final answer was that it was too late to conclude any treaty on the administration of territory liberated by the American Army, and the American Government suggests that an ambassador with full powers be appointed to General Patton's army. I was selected to be this ambassador. An answer came from General Patton's HQ—which at the time of this negotiation was in Regensburg—that he would welcome a military mission.

To cut a long story short, I was changed from a Foreign Service officer into a Major. I bought a uniform at Selfridges, put the thing on, was flown to Eisenhower's HQ (at Versailles at the time), and then immediately flown to Regensburg. General Patton welcomed me in a kind of icy way: 'Why didn't you come a week before?' It was as if he did not know. And so it was in an American jeep that I returned to my native country six years later, in this English uniform with a Czech insignia on it, first to Western Bohemia and then finally to Pilsen.

You know, it was a *walk* to Prague. We could have liberated Prague in six hours. Here was the crack Army of General Patton in Pilsen, and the forward elements were, let us say, twenty miles from Prague. Therefore it was easy. As you know, the order came that Patton cannot advance to Prague. What was the reaction? I think it was a feeling of frustration. It had a devastating effect.

I passed the lines into Prague—the Soviet/American demarcation line—and I met an older friend of mine who was a jeweller and watchmaker in Prague. He saw me in the uniform with V Corps, the American insignia, on it, and he put in

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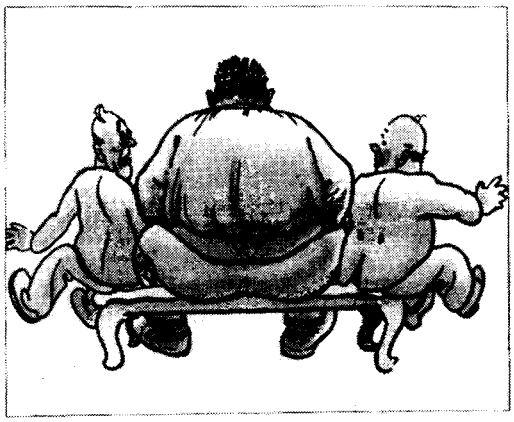
one sentence the answer to your question. He said, 'If General Eisenhower and General Patton don't dare to displease the Russians, why should I?' And he told me that he was going to join the Communist Party. He had been a member of my Catholic Democratic Party. But he was joining the Communist Party. 'This is where the East wind is going to blow over Prague.' An opportunist? Sure! But I think that sentence, which I have not forgotten since I met him in June 1945, I will never forget, because it expressed what this move had done."

AS STALIN SURVEYED the forward lines the Red Army had reached in Europe early in 1945, how he weighed the opportunities offered to him is still a subject for speculation. The Soviet archives have never been available to Western historians, and only rarely, and then usually in censored instances, to those of the Communist bloc.

"The only thing these Communist leaders understand are facts and force", Churchill had said of Stalin and his satraps the year before. Therefore the tragic opening gambit of Roosevelt at Yalta—that all American forces would be withdrawn from Europe within two years of the War ending—must surely have been deeply etched in Stalin's mind. He could afford to wait two years! His concern, after Roosevelt's death, must have been to see if that Presidential forecast would be fulfilled.

It was. The troops were brought home by President Truman. Stalin could see that he had got away with the installation of a Communist government in Poland, following elections whose fraudulence was at once denounced. None the less, he moved with caution. The Americans, who had paid a high price at Teheran and at Yalta for Soviet collaboration in the war against Japan, suddenly had no further need of it. The atomic bomb had become the new determinant of power relationships among nations.



(Illustrazione del Popolo, Turin)

In the satellite countries of Eastern Europe, where the final outcome was not already politically determined as with Hungary and Czechoslovakia, elections went forward which seemed to lend, at first, some credence to the Yalta declarations. A close study has been made of this early period—before the Communist suppression of democratically elected representatives in Hungary—by the historian Charles Gati, of Columbia University.

GATI: "The old political class had all but disappeared. In that sense there was an administrative political renewal and reorganisation quite aside from what the Russians had in mind. The old régime had discredited itself, and most of its members had, in point of fact, left Hungary, most of them with the retreating German Army. So a new political order did come into being in Hungary, just as it did everywhere else in Europe. There was a lack of continuity everywhere, and in Hungary even more so perhaps than in the West European countries. The war years and the destruction of the country made economic change of a radical type quite appealing. When you have a war-torn country—Hungary was devastated during the War—then the people become quite ready to look for short cuts. I would say that there was considerable appeal, among the population at large, in radical, perhaps socialist or social-democratic, transformation. In that sense one could talk about one of two possibilities: either a populist, agrarian, radical transformation or a socialist, industrial transformation. Which one would prevail was, I think, in the end determined by the Soviet Union, but in that sense Hungary was in a radical mood. Now, when it comes to politics, that is a different story altogether. In politics, whatever other issues existed at the time, there was only one that ultimately determined the political outlook of most voters, and that was the relationship with the Soviet Union. The country was practically unanimously anti-Soviet then, as it is even today. There was no chance for the Communist Party to prevail under free circumstances, because it was linked to the Soviet Union."

—What was the immediate aftermath, in Hungary, of the Yalta agreements? There was a generalised statement to the effect that there would be free elections, and there was something called the Allied Control Commission which was supposed to have jurisdiction in seeing that this broad ideal was discharged. What actually happened?

GATI: "Most Hungarians assumed that Hungary would be in the Soviet sphere, but what that Soviet sphere would signify was something that few people, at that time, could properly understand. A sphere can mean control—becoming in effect the satellite of the Soviet Union—and some people even assumed that, sooner or later, Hungary would be incorporated into the Soviet Union. There was a

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widespread fear that this would happen. On the other hand, there were those who believed that the West would not tolerate such a development, that Hungary might end up in the Soviet sphere of influence but not in the Soviet sphere of control. Influence would have meant that Hungary's domestic development could be pluralistic, while on foreign policy matters the Soviet Union would insist on Hungary following the Soviet example—what we would understand today, perhaps, as Hungary being 'Finlandised.' So those were the two alternatives that people drew from Yalta—either that Hungary would become a sphere of Soviet control, or that it would be assigned to a Soviet sphere of influence."

—In the immediate aftermath of Yalta, violations of the "spirit" of the agreements were apparent almost at once in, for example, Romania. What was the reaction to the Western attitude to this?

GATI: "Disappointment. It made politicians, non-Communist politicians, feel that they were alone, that they could not count on American or British support. Some of these politicians, we now know, visited the American, British, and French embassies in Budapest asking for some small support —for example, prior to elections—and they were invariably told, often in not particularly polite language, that the three Western powers did not believe in interfering in the internal affairs of Hungary and thus assisting these non-Communist parties. It helped divide the non-Communist parties, because some politicians began to make their adjustments to what they sensed was the inevitable Sovietisation of Hungary, while others continued to fight."

—Out of the forces which were eligible to contest political life in Hungary, as it began to revive, some of them were proscribed by the various interpretations of the Yalta agreements. Within those limits of eligibility, what was the political balance in Hungary at the War's end?

GATI: "At the War's end it was the Communist Party and the Soviet Union which established the provisional government, and in effect assigned seats and made agreements. I think the elections in November 1945, which were free elections, pretty much reflected those initial choices. What were they? In the elections, the Smallholders Party—which was a broker-party and quite non-ideological except that it was for Hungary's independence—received 57% of the vote. The Social Democrats, a kind of centralist social-democratic party by European standards, received over 17% of the vote. All in all, the Communists could gain only 17% of the vote and I think that was the height of their popularity in Hungary. Never before and never since were the Communists as popular as in November 1945."

IF IN HUNGARY the Communists were relatively few, in Czechoslovakia they were suddenly legion. Among the broad mass of the population there was, again, a general expectation of something better to follow the failures which had led to the War.

In December 1945, both the Americans and the Russians had withdrawn their military forces from Czechoslovakia. Unlike the other satellites there was no Red Army presence to dictate political results. It has been a question of lasting interest why, in what had been the one successful experiment in parliamentary democracy in East and Central Europe, so many of the Czech population shifted their allegiance from subservience to the German occupation to a further subservience to the newly dominant power, the Soviet Union. Jacques Rupnik, one of the young Czech historians living in the West, has published an important study of the rise of the Czech Communist Party.

RUPNIK: "I think what distinguished Czechoslovakia from the rest of Eastern Europe was the existence of a powerful, indigenously rooted Communist Party. It's the only East European country—with Yugoslavia actually—where the Communist Party in 1945 was an indigenous, strong force which did represent something in domestic politics. Elsewhere—in Bulgaria and Romania—the Communists were a mere handful. There you had no power whatsoever without the backing of the Soviet military. That is why the Communist takeover had to take place immediately after the Russian liberation. There was no real period of national democracy, or national-democratic road to socialism and all that stuff we have seen in Czechoslovakia. In Czechoslovakia you do have a strong Communist Party. That is one factor."

—But numerically quite weak. At the end of the War there were only 40,000 members of the Communist Party, and within a matter of weeks it was half-a-million!

RUPNIK: "Ah, but this is it! This is the answer: that there was this fantastic radical tide from below, great aspirations suddenly expressed after six years of Occupation. People want change. And of course one temptation in these situations is to switch as far to the other extreme as possible. And there are the Communists, with what appeared then as their clean Wartime record, and their identification with the Soviet Union, the Liberator of Czechoslovakia, the country that stood behind Czechoslovakia.

All that played in favour of the Communists. The second thing I should add is that of course the non-Communist forces were not in conflict with the Communists. The democratic political parties were working in agreement and cooperation with the Communists. You do not have the Polish situation, with a Government-in-Exile which is anti-Com-

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munist, and then a Communist-sponsored Lublin government, with the two fighting for legitimacy.

And the third factor one should add—this is a very touchy subject, and one has to be careful in phrasing it—is really the relative weakness of the domestic resistance during the War. For people who did not overtly resist, the situation was not too bad—the majority of the Czech workers had full employment during the War. I am not talking about the heroic minority who fought throughout, often at very heavy cost. The bulk of the population did not really resist, one should say, and after the War was compensating for that by giving allegiance to the new force in the area—the Soviet Union."

AT YALTA THE RUSSIANS had insisted on an amendment to the agreement about holding "free elections" which forbade those considered to be "fascist" organisations or individuals to take part. It was a category to which they were able to give a wide and arbitrary interpretation, as Churchill said to Stalin at the time. However, the first elections held after the War in Hungary and Czechoslovakia returned clear non-Communist majorities. But the result was, from the outset, a deceptive pluralism. The reality, as in Hungary, was that the government and the Communist opposition were permitted to exist only side-by-side and in coalition.

CHARLES GATI: "The Communists could not be excluded. Their place in the coalition was a 'given' —the Soviet Union would not have tolerated it otherwise. They could have mobilised mass demonstrations, and stopped some of the factories; and don't forget that the Secret Police were already in their hands, so they could have caused a good deal of trouble."

—Isn't this the ambiguity in the Yalta accords? Yalta promised free elections. You have free elections, and they return a non-Communist majority which really cannot operate without the Communists. . . .

GATI: "Absolutely true. One way to explain this is to understand the political system on two levels. One level was the parliamentary system—and that was pluralistic; not generally free, but pluralistic and dominated by non-Communists. On the other hand, below that parliamentary level—and below the level of an essentially free press (which existed in Hungary for three years) and a free economy (the Stock Market closed in Hungary only in the winter of 1947–48)—the Communist Party was making a determined and successful effort to capture the key positions of coercion in the country, and particularly the dreaded Secret Police. So in some ways you have two political systems coexisting, side-by-side, perhaps as a result of Yalta."

FROM THE BEGINNING, therefore, democracy was being reduced, particularly so in Czechoslovakia. An important ingredient in the cement which bound the Communist Parties of Eastern and Central Europe to Stalin was their enthusiastic promotion, at his insistence, of huge transfers of population. To add to the eight million Germans expelled from the East (in what is now mostly Polish territory), three million Sudeten Germans were expelled from Czechoslovakia. The Communists moved adroitly to exploit the empty spaces this created for land reform. The vigour and discipline of Marxist-Leninist methods and organisation, unmatched by any effective responses from the democratic parties, show up dramatically in all accounts of their path to power in Czechoslovakia, both before and after the withdrawal of the Red Army.

Professor Edward Taborsky was Private Secretary to the ill-fated President of Czechoslovakia, Edward Benes, and was also his biographer.

TABORSKY: "When the Red Army moved in they contacted the local Communists, and arranged a sort of a meeting in a public hall where already they had a prepared list of people who should be on the People's Committees. They were either Communists or pro-Communists. There were quick trials—there was no *habeas corpus* or anything like that. If you opposed them, and they wanted to get rid of you, they would simply denounce you to the Soviet *NKVD* who would deport you, or they would put in you in jail, saying that they'd seen you with the *Gestapo*. So there was simply a lawlessness, and that's how they flourished."

—But there was an extra ingredient in Czechoslovakia, with the armed militias. People in the factories were armed.

TABORSKY: "That was also part of it, because they organised those 'People's Militias' (as they called them), supposedly guarding the factories against roving 'enemies.' Then, of course, the time came when they brought them by bus to Prague, and paraded through the streets with rifles, so they had a private army of sorts. Another thing was the question of 'land reform', because, after all, there was plenty of land from the Sudeten Germans. So you had a number of peasants who, at least temporarily, gave support to the Communists simply in order to get that land.

Let me add one more thing. You know, most intellectuals—I mean artists and writers—were Left-leaning, of course. Not necessarily Marxist-Leninists, but a good many of them were Com-

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munist Party members. And now the Communists came, with a Minister of Information controlling everything for publishing and with the slogan that 'Under Communism' they would be free to write and publish without any financial worry, and so on. And they all enjoyed it. They bitterly resented it after 1948—some of them said, 'We did not expect that'—but at this time they supported the Communists.

And so you had organised labour, a good many peasants (even though they did not believe in communism) supporting the Party. And you had this group of intellectuals, especially artists and writers and so on. So it was not merely just a coup by a minority. It was really what helped them to build their position and get away with it."

THE PERIOD FROM 1944 to 1948 is regarded by the Communist Parties of Eastern Europe as the period of revolution, thus justifying "revolutionary coercion."

For example, although the Communist Party in Hungary was the real possessor of power, it had suffered a humiliating defeat at the elections. The Hungarian Communist leader, Matyas Rakosi, contributed to the dictionary of politics an epithet for this period which has stuck—his description of Communist methods used against the parliamentary forces as "salami tactics." Here is a disarming confession of how the Party in Hungary proceeded to demolish the elected majority against it. Zoltan Vas, the former Mayor of Budapest, was one of the Hungarian Communist hierarchy centrally involved. Between 1940 and 1943 he had worked for the Comintern, and after that was posted to the Soviet Army and given the rank of Colonel. He was in charge of the psychological warfare waged against the opposing Hungarian Army before he became concerned, after the War in Hungary, with "salami tactics."

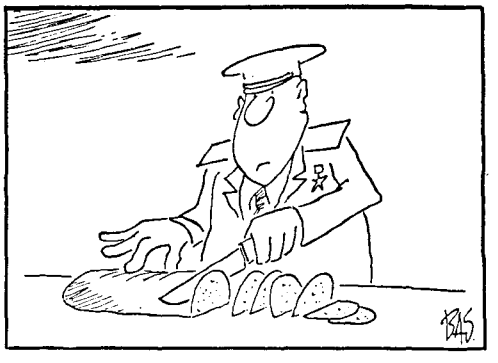
VAS: "We had democratic parties—the Smallholders Party, the Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party, and about twenty other different kinds of parties. We could not finish them all off at the same time. So we started with the weakest ones. We applied such enormous pressure on them —partly through arrests since we controlled the police, and partly through economic and all other kinds of pressure—that they were forced to dissolve voluntarily. In other words, we 'liquidated' them. Take, for example, the Smallholders Party, which was the biggest party in Hungary. We organised a Communist-influenced Left wing inside the party; then we threw all kinds of accusations at their leaders. We accused their most popular leader, Bela Kovacs, the Secretary-General of their party, of being a traitor to the cause of the Hungarian people. We decided to arrest the Smallholders' leaders. I am using the plural because, no matter what my thoughts were in those days (and even then I was more of a humanitarian than the others), I cannot say that in my capacity as a member of the government and of the *Politburo* I was not responsible for the policies of the Party."

—Can you give me specific examples of the way "salami tactics" worked against the Smallholders Party?

VAS: "I've started by relating the Bela Kovacs affair for this very reason. He proved so popular that we could not—I am using the plural once more—we could not take him to court. There was no court in Hungary that would have convicted Bela Kovacs. Then we turned to the Soviet Army, and requested that they arrest him. They snatched him from Hungary, accusing him of 'spying on the Soviet Army' for 'the imperialists.' He was sentenced to ten years, and he spent those years in the Soviet Union.

Another example that illustrates the way we conducted 'salami tactics' is that of the leader of the Smallholders Party, the Prime Minister, Ferenc Nagy. At the time he was on holiday in Switzerland. They sent him a copy of Bela Kovacs' confession, according to which Ferenc Nagy was also a party to Kovacs' treasonable acts. Ferenc Nagy wanted to return immediately to protest his innocence, but Rakosi sent him the reply, 'Come home, come if you like, but there is no telling what the courts will do to you. You might be arrested at the border for your crime—but come anyway.' And so the 'salami tactics' took care of the second most important leader of the Smallholders too.

Next on the list was the President of the Republic, Zoltan Tildy, another Smallholder. His son-in-law, the Hungarian Ambassador to Egypt, was arrested and charged with espionage, with betraying state secrets to the enemy. Tildy had no option but to resign immediately. So the real leaders of the Smallholders Party were put out of action. They were replaced by the so-called Leftists of that party —most of whom, of course, had secretly joined the Communist Party."



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THESE WERE NOT isolated examples; they had their counterparts throughout East and Central Europe. In the specific, intriguing instance of Hungary, after the 1956 Uprising was put down by the Soviet invasion, the Party has found it expedient to acknowledge some of the truth about the past in order to win greater acceptance of its rule. Over the years, fragments of authentic history have emerged cleansed from the silt of Party secrecy and changes in Party line. They do not get published in the journals of the Communist Party. However, it is evidently permissible for a senior Party figure like Zoltan Vas to concede openly now what the Party always denied. After their ignominious defeat at the first elections after the War, those of 1947 in Hungary were rigged by the Communists.

VAS: "In the election regulations there was a paragraph according to which anyone who was not staying at his permanent address at the time of the election could go to the Election Committee and ask for a document to enable him to vote in another constituency. This document was printed on a blue card. The blue card stated that although such-and-such a person had been registered to vote in such-and-such a constituency, he would cast his vote, say, not in Budapest but near Lake Balaton instead. There were about 22,000 such voters at the time. But what we did was to forge blue cards and give them to Communists, thus creating about 80,000 fake ballot papers. Altogether there were 22,000 legitimate ballot papers out of the 100,000 blue cards. The rest were fake.

The elections were unfairly conducted in another respect too. Before the election each voter had to appear before a committee to prove he had never been a fascist or a member of certain parties. On this basis a lot of people were disqualified from voting. They never even got as far as to cast either a genuine or a fake vote."

WITHIN THE COMMUNIST PARTIES which Stalin and the Red Army assisted to power, it was quickly demonstrated that there were several levels of reliability. Those members who had been trained or educated in Moscow took precedence over all others, including Communists of long standing. A significant discrimination was established between these "Easterners", or Muscovites, and the "Westerners", those who had largely had their political education in contact with Western culture and influence.

As the various bridgeheads were seized from the democratic parties by "salami tactics", those who were considered most reliable of all, the Secret Police, who had a direct chain of command to Moscow, formed sections inside the relevant Ministries, as with Foreign Affairs and Agriculture. This "Party within the Party" duplicated the whole apparatus of the State.

Above the heads of the Communists themselves there hovered an unresolved, hazy and elusive concept: the issue of separate roads to socialism, the degree of independence to be enjoyed once Utopia had been installed. "Salami tactics" were soon to begin devouring the Communists also. Bela Szasz was a Communist official in both the Hungarian Foreign and Agricultural Ministries when the anatomy of this future struggle was being revealed by Stalin.

SZASZ: "The Muscovites who came home from Moscow told us other Communists that they hoped it wouldn't be in our country like it was in Moscow. And things did not start like in Moscow. Hungary started as a multi-party system, a democracy even in the Western sense. And we, who were Communists, wanted to participate in that democracy. When we saw the so-called 'salami tactics' of Rakosi, who one by one killed the democratic parties, then we began to suspect that it wouldn't be different from Russia, but that it would be like in Russia. And the majority of those who came back from Russia and suffered shorter or longer prison sentences there, they did not want that, most of them."

—But what led you to that belief? After all, the formation of a national front which the Communist Party alone will dominate, in the end, is a fundamental tenet of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

SZASZ: "Retrospectively it looks like that. But Stalin invented this phrase 'People's Democracy', which is a tautology because democracy means the people in power. We thought our country is not ripe for a Communist takeover, a Communist revolution, and we thought we will go the democratic way. Imre Nagy, later Prime Minister during the Hungarian Revolution, did not want quick collectivisation. He thought it should take at least 20–25 years. So we thought that in this time we can educate the people and win them for this idea. It was absolutely different than in the Soviet Union. There were several parties in Hungary, and the Communists were not in a majority—neither in Parliament nor in the Ministries. What we did not realise was that it was not important really. The Communists had the Secret Police in their hands, and the Secret Police had its chain of command to Moscow. The Secret Police was the most reliable group of the Communist Party, and formally under the supervision of the Party Chief, Rakosi.

I can give my personal experience, for instance. I was then in the Ministry of the Exterior—the Foreign Office in English—and a Colonel of the Secret Police was put in my place. I went over to the department for Press and Culture, in the same

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Ministry—and I was head of this department, but it was a great difference. He reorganised the Foreign Office completely. In the section where I'd been earlier, the personnel department, that all came into the power of the *AVH*, the Hungarian Secret Police. It was directed not just by this man but by the Centre of the Secret Police. In my presence this man once phoned to the Secret Police for money—he got not only the money which was his due in the Foreign Office, but also some supplement from the Secret Police."

—And who were these people?

SZASZ: "These people were trained Secret Policemen—partly trained in Russia, partly not. But the Russians had a completely separate, and outside the lines of the state, contact and chain of command through the Hungarian Secret Police. So without the knowledge of the Hungarian government the Russians could initiate things inside the Hungarian Secret Police itself. There was a Ministry of Agriculture, and there was a section of Agriculture in the Secret Police. And so on."

—In the memoirs you've written about this you say that for those who had been trained in Moscow, the Party was not just an abstract idea, a theoretical and practical framework of ideas, as it was for the faithful Party members (in whose ranks I take it you included yourself). For "them", these others trained in Moscow, "it was a collective term embracing notions of power, **our** *power,* **our** *authority,* **our** *career."*

SZASZ: "Yes, sure. Because, for instance, the people of the Secret Police and the people who came to leading positions, mainly educated and trained in Moscow—they had a lot of material and other advantages. For instance, leaders of the Hungarian Communist Party could write a cheque for any sum and the National Bank honoured these cheques. A simple detective of the Secret Police earned about eight times as much as a manual worker."

—I'd like to press the point with you why, as a loyal member of the Party, you were surprised by all this. In fact, you're saying you trusted Stalin—either that or you believed that Russia somehow had changed during the course of the War, and things were going to be different?

SZASZ: "Russia changed for a while during the War and after the War, but then changed back again."

—Yes, but your hope or belief or expectation that things in Hungary would not follow the Moscow experience was based upon what?

SZASZ: "It was not only my expectation but even the expectation of the most Stalinist leader like Revai. I remember he published a pamphlet about 'Hungarian Real Socialism', and this was taught in seminars. Suddenly they withdrew this pamphlet. But the general opinion in Hungary, and not only in Communist circles, was that the way of Hungary could not be the way of Russia. You see, it was a different country with different traditions and different people."

—This is the sort of naive delusion for which people like Roosevelt are reproached in hindsight by many historians. But it seems less understandable among the ranks of the Communists. Why did you think the nature of the Soviet Union had fundamentally changed?

SZASZ: "We did not think the Soviet Union had changed fundamentally. But we thought in general that we would not follow the Soviet way."

—But what was going to guarantee your ability to do that?

SZASZ: "Nothing. Nothing. In retrospect. But I am absolutely sure the policy of the Soviet Union was not certain at this moment. Stalin was really a man who was close to paranoia. Such a man cannot be counted as normal. His fear of the Western influence in Hungary and everywhere else was so strong that the trials, the Show Trials—like our trial, the Rajk Trial—were part of this fear and to eliminate the people who had some Western connections."

ONCE AGAIN, it was the significance of the situation in Poland which was to provide the key to the next events in Central Europe. Today we know, from disclosures which have come from within the Communist Parties of the Eastern Bloc, that Stalin did not see Eastern Europe as a single unit, but made a distinction. The countries along the border of the Soviet Union—particularly Poland, but also Romania and Bulgaria—which were the strategic highways that led to Germany and the Balkans, were not negotiable, and he had taken effective power in them almost immediately. That first step had been followed by a pause, and the time had come for another advance. Czechoslovakia and Hungary were targets of opportunity in the hands of Gottwald and Rakosi, Stalin's satraps, who would prove obedient to his will.

CHARLES GATI: "Rakosi in Hungary and Gottwald in Czechoslovakia were told to 'go slow.' Specifically, they were told that the take-overs in those two countries should not take place in less than ten to fifteen years. Now, the reason for that is very revealing and very important. For Stalin the reason was to accommodate the West in those two countries, in order to divert attention from Poland. Indeed, among the top leaders of the Hungarian Communist Party—the very few leaders who knew

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about this—the slow road was called 'the Polish Trade-off.' So that if the West were to protest about what was happening in Poland, Stalin would be in a position to point to Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and claim that what was happening in Poland was indigenous domestic development. He had nothing to do with it, the Soviet Union had nothing to do with it. After all, take a look at Czechoslovakia and Hungary—the Soviet Army could have effected a take-over there, but it didn't happen. Therefore he was innocent."

AND WHEN NO CHALLENGE, beyond protest, came from the West, Stalin's hands were untied. An inevitable casualty of the Soviet leader's perception of an opportunity renewed was the parliamentary democracy in Czechoslovakia. Offered up as a sacrifice by the West to Hitler at Munich, the Czechs had sought a new relationship with the Russians. The Czech President, Edward Benes, was the incarnation of the optimistic interpretation of Yalta—"cooperation" between East and West as allies, with a role for Czechoslovakia to play between the two as "a useful bridge." The President, who was the political heir to Thomas Masaryk, founder of Czech parliamentary democracy, proved to be a fateful instrument of its eventual domination by the Communists.

EDWARD TABORSKY: "One main asset they had was the unbelievable behaviour of the President at that time. I talked to him many times about the situation, especially when it was obvious that the Communists had begun their push, and that the only obstacle would be him. That he must firmly act, not as a man above the parties, but simply by taking control—and whenever they would go to excess, to stop them. And he agreed with that. But when he came back—partly probably because he was no longer physically well, but I think it was mostly his own behaviour—he did nothing about it. He was a parliamentarian, used to manoeuvre, and he hoped that in this way he would be able to manoeuvre indefinitely. But the Communists began to fill the vacancies with their people, especially in the Police and so on, and he did nothing about it.

After we returned I remember how time and again I mentioned to him—because I was also a legal adviser—'Mr President, this is not right legally. You shouldn't sign it.' And he said, 'No, I won't sign it.' But when Gottwald came to see him, he did sign it, you see. He instructed me several times, for instance, 'You phone the Minister of the Interior', who was a Communist. They had arrested Vaclav Talich, the Philharmonic Orchestra conductor. 'You phone him. That is intolerable. It should not be done.' I phoned the Minister. But Benes did nothing about it. So he simply began to yield, you see. It was unbelievable to me. So obviously the Communists came to the conclusion that he could be pushed around. And he was."

THE SHADOW OF MUNICH darkened all Benes's considerations. Against, at first, the strong objections of Churchill and Eden, who wanted to keep Czechoslovakia out of the Soviet orbit, Benes went to Moscow during the War, determined to base post-War policy on a close understanding and alliance with the Soviet Union, and in effect to reverse Thomas Masaryk's historical policy of looking Westwards. In Moscow, in December 1943, Benes prepared the ground for a far-reaching treaty, and he received (and believed) Stalin's assurances about non-interference in Czech affairs.

TABORSKY: "At eight o'clock we arrived. We were ushered into a sort of reception room on the second floor somewhere in the Kremlin, and we waited there. And all of a sudden the door opened, and Stalin walked in, flanked by Molotov. I remember how he walked towards us and we moved towards him. And my first impression was, well, what a small-sized fellow! I imagined him, from his portraits, having dark hair and a fine face. Now I saw he was an elderly gentleman, with thinning hair and a lot of wrinkles. He came towards us walking really like an old man walks. He shook our hands and started immediately joking, you see. And so it was a sort of pleasant impression. It was quite different from what I expected—the man of iron will, the dictator. Here was an old uncle of sorts, shaking hands with you, patting the President on the shoulder, and starting talking. It did not look like an iron-fisted dictator who was responsible for so many things at home and so on.

You know that one reason for this trip to Moscow was the conclusion of the alliance treaty between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. It had been negotiated before, but on the Russian initiative they had included an Article that Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union 'would not interfere in one another's internal affairs.' They stressed that, all along. Whenever Benes wanted to explain to the Soviets, as a good friend, 'Now this is what we propose to do in Czechoslovakia', Stalin and Molotov would almost just close their ears! 'All that's your affair' and 'We don't want to interfere.' And if we go on like that, 'Maybe the West would feel that we want to interfere, so don't tell us about it.' Something like that, you see."

—Of course, with the benefit of hindsight. . . .

TABORSKY: "Yes, they weren't sincere. We know that now, of course. Benes learnt that very shortly thereafter. He came back from Moscow in January

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1944, quite jubilant. Everything seemed OK, 'Everything is settled, we have no problems.' And then by the autumn of 1944 it all began to collapse."

—Can you remember Benes's immediate reactions as he came away from that meeting with Stalin?

TABORSKY: "I remember that we were in the villa, waiting for him to come back. It was a long meeting in the evening, Stalin always operated late in the evening. He came back and he was all jubilant. 'We have settled everything, we agreed on everything.' That was it. Then he sat at the table and began to tell us about the details and so on. And over the next years he was quite convinced that there will be no problem, and that the Soviets will respect Czechoslovakia's independence. He assumed that the Soviet Union will simply be so exhausted at the end of the War and will need a lot of Western aid, especially American aid, to subsidise the development of the Soviet Union. He felt that Czechoslovakia was a test case of goodwill. He felt that the Russians would want to prove to the West that they could be trusted by leaving Czechoslovakia alone."

THE TRANSCRIPTS of Benes's conversations with Stalin have only recently been published. They contain remarkable disclosures.[1] They show that as early as 1943 Czechoslovakia offered itself as an instrument of Russian expansion into Central Europe; Benes told Stalin that Czechoslovakia would always speak and act in a manner agreeable to the Soviet government. This posture of unsolicited subordination to Stalin reveals the personal tragedy of a man who, in trying to rehabilitate himself and his country from the disaster of Munich appeasement, proceeded to make essentially the same miscalculation about Stalin's intentions.

JACQUES RUPNIK: "Benes promised to the Russians in domestic policy things that were far beyond anything the Russians themselves were asking for. The Slovaks were to be politically written off as far as he was concerned.

—And punished?

RUPNIK: "And punished. Secondly, the transfer of the Sudeten Germans: they were to be expelled."

—Three million?

RUPNIK: "Three million people. Then a widespread programme of nationalisation of industry, and a transition to socialism, again far beyond what the Russians were expecting from him. This is an absolutely devastating document for Benes's standing in history."

WHILE PRESIDENT BENES was shaping with Stalin the new post-War Czechoslovakia, as the man who stood for continuity with the past and the link with parliamentary democracy and its restoration, the record of his Moscow conversations shows how he came to embody a breach with that past. His acquiescence in the reduction of democracy and his enthusiasm for the expulsion and transfer of the German population of the Sudetenland have assumed a particular significance for a later generation of historians.

RUPNIK: "He is the stepping-stone, really, for the Communist transition to power. We can say, perhaps, that there was not much scope for a genuine Western-type parliamentary democracy. What is astonishing is that Benes was not prepared to stand up for that and to fight for that. Let's recall that the two main political parties from pre-War Czechoslovakia, the Agrarian Party and the People's Party in Slovakia (the big Catholic party), are being banned, so that the whole political spectrum of the country is being shrunk and moved from Right to Left. And you have the German question. That is the essential breach. This is why this question is being so eagerly debated today among Czecho-

(American Review, New York)

[1] *The Benes-Stalin-Molotov Conversations in December 1943: New Documents*, tr. Vojtech Mastny, Columbia University.

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slovak intellectuals, especially the dissident historians. What was the meaning of that transfer? Was it simply an easy way to compensate for what happened in the 1930s when the Germans sided with Hitler to destroy Czechoslovakia? Or wasn't it to have deeper significance for the country, which has really been based since the 13th century on a coexistence of Czech and Germans in Bohemia? That historical breach has left enormous consequences.

I mean, that the first labour camps in May 1945 were set up not just for the Sudeten Germans, considered collectively guilty of their association with Hitler's Germany, is of course a meagre consolation to the people who ended up in those same labour camps after 1948 because they were Catholics, or nationalists, or simply opposed to Communist rule. The fact is that Benes and all the non-Communist parties accepted that people should be deprived of their civil rights, including the right to vote, on the basis of their nationality. That is, the Germans and the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia are written off, for all practical purposes. That is an essential breach that only prepares the ground for many similar breaches. In 1945 it was done on national grounds. You cannot vote because you are German or Hungarian. After 1948 you will be deprived of your civil rights because you are an opponent of communism or because you are a religious believer, or any other reason. And of course, for historians looking back at the formation of a totalitarian system in Czechoslovakia after 1948, this is a vital turning-point."

THE CZECH PRESIDENT'S jubilation at his treaty with Stalin was short-lived. He watched with alarm the fate meted out to the Poles in the Warsaw Uprising and then, as the Soviet Army arrived at the Czech border, he saw the Russians promptly announce the annexation of Ruthenia, a part of Czechoslovakia itself. By the time of his second meeting with Stalin in Moscow, just before the return of the Czech Government-in-Exile at the time of Liberation, Stalin's earlier assurances were being rapidly discounted. But still Benes sounded no public alarm, and he refused to allow his misgivings to become a matter for any public controversy.

EDWARD TABORSKY: "The basic reason is that he felt that if he would suddenly change around and would do what the Poles were doing, then he would be even worse off. He trusted Stalin—his trust was betrayed. What do you do now? Do you turn around and fight them? So he thought now he could salvage most by still continuing to say—'Well, we will not make it any problem.' He always stressed that about Ruthenia, for instance—'We will never make it any matter of public controversy.' "

—Can I refresh your mind about what Stalin actually said at that second meeting—at the well-known dinner speech in March 1945, with Benes sitting there? This is Stalin at, I think, his most cynically guileful in view of what subsequently happened:

> **"The Soviet Union wants nothing other than to gain allies who will always be prepared to resist the German danger. The Soviet Union will not interfere in the internal affairs of its allies."**

And then he turns to Benes and says,

> **"I know that even among you there are some who doubt it, perhaps even you are a little dubious, but I give you the assurance that we will never interfere in the internal affairs of our allies. Such is Lenin's neo-Slavism which we Bolshevik Communists are following there can be no talk of a hegemony of the Soviet Union."**

Now, was Benes reassured by that? He must have known that was nonsense, otherwise why was Stalin asking for Communists in the government?

TABORSKY: "Well, I think Benes wasn't 100% reassured. But again he tried to cling to the hope that at least Stalin would not go overboard, that if he sees that the Communists in Czechoslovakia have a strong position in Government, and nothing really can be decided against them, then that would be some sort of an assurance to Stalin that Czechoslovakia would not turn around internally. It was sheer desperation, really. He wouldn't reveal it to anybody, including myself. No, he was always trying to be optimistic, as optimistic as he could be—though you could see somehow in his face he was bitterly disappointed."

THE CZECH AND HUNGARIAN Communists had returned to Prague and Budapest at the end of the War with instructions to await the appropriate time for the final seizure of power. "The appro-

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priate time", it was clear, would conform to Stalin's interests and to nothing else. That time had come. These disciplined, unscrupulous minorities showed themselves pledged to the service of the political interests of the Soviet Union. With a brilliant blatancy, Stalin ordered the changes which finally settled the question of power for the Czech and Hungarian nations. Today, it is known when and why the parties switched their tactics.

CHARLES GATI: "They changed in the autumn of 1947. To explain this in Hungarian terms: at the very end of August 1947 there were still elections in Hungary. The Communist Party, cheating a little bit at the elections, could still get only 22% of the vote. So you still had a 78% non-Communist majority in the country. Now, why would the Communists have wanted an election that they knew they couldn't win, except that they were still being told by the Soviet Union not to seize power? But then, the next month, something happened. The 'Communist Information Bureau' was formed—a small organisation of European Communist Parties. It was formed in Poland, and it was there that Soviet leaders such as Zhdanov and Malenkov made their speeches.

What the West came to understand at the time was that this was the beginning of the 'Cold War', because Zhdanov made his famous speech about 'two camps' in the world, the end of 'cooperation' among the three major allies, and so on. But in point of fact there was a second theme at this conference, and that had to do with the behaviour of Communist Parties in both Eastern and Western Europe. The two Parties that were criticised most bluntly at that meeting, behind the scenes, were the French and the Italian Communist Parties. They were criticised for having allowed themselves to be kicked out of the coalition governments of those two countries.

There were other developments, I think, which were as important or even more important to Stalin. One was the American policy of 'Containment', expressed in the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. The other, I think, was this incipient diversity in International Communism after the War. There were too many roads to power. Stalin was losing control. He was concerned about the Yugoslavs, who were going too fast by his standards, and he was concerned about the Italians and the French, the Czechs and the Hungarians, who were going a bit too slow. All in all, I think the Cominform meeting in Poland was intended to accomplish at least two things. First, to mobilise the Communist Parties behind a tough Soviet foreign policy, aimed at the isolation of the United States in the world; and, secondly, the meeting intended to re-establish Soviet control over International Communism."

THE CZECH COMMUNIST PARTY archives, which were briefly opened during the Prague Spring of 1968, showed that it *was* the failure of the big Italian and French Parties which led Stalin to dismiss the option of a parliamentary path for the Czechs. The Cominform meeting instructed the Czech Communists to seize control, and the *coup d'état* came in February 1948.

Shortly after it President Benes died, a broken man. A few days before his death he said, "My greatest mistake was that I refused to believe that Stalin lied to me cynically, and that his assurances were an intentional deceit." And yet it was Benes himself who had defined that mutual relationship in such abjectly deferential terms at their meeting in Moscow in December 1943.

The claim of the Czech Communists that they achieved power by constitutional means cannot be sustained. The critical move in a constitutional battle with President Benes, which went on for six days, was the creation overnight throughout Czechoslovakia of so-called "Action Committees", outside the normal organs of power. They had orders to use revolutionary methods to wrest for themselves as much authority as possible.

The non-Communist parties had made no preparations in the event that Benes would fail, as he did, to hold out against such pressures. During the six-day crisis, the Communist Prime Minister, Klement Gottwald, and the trade-union leader, Zapotocky, saw Benes every day, demanding his approval of a new government. In the end they backed that demand with threats. The record survives of President Benes's last conversation with them in his office on 25 February 1948.

JACQUES RUPNIK: "This is a transcript of what was actually said: 'You only need one stone to start the avalanche. In the factories the avalanche is already on the move', and Zapotocky finally adds, 'A single man cannot oppose an avalanche.' Indeed Benes felt very much the same way, that there was no chance of resisting that avalanche, and this is what he replied to Zapotocky in that crucial moment.

> 'I don't want to complicate things for you. What matters for me is to be able to save not the appearances, that's not the word, but a decent, honest position, and to create a situation which would leave the way open for you. I don't want to create any unnecessary difficulties for you. It's not in my nature.' "

THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE, rather than violence itself, had proved sufficient. As thousands of Communists from the Action Committees paraded the streets of Prague in blue overalls with guns in their belts, so passed the Czech parliamentary democracy.

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All important Cabinet posts went to the Communists, with the exception of Foreign Affairs which stayed in the hands of one of the best known of European politicians, Jan Masaryk, the son of Thomas Masaryk, the republic's founder. A year before, Masaryk had said to an American correspondent, "If I have to choose between East and West, I would have to go with the East, but it would kill me."

Three weeks after the coup of 1948, Masaryk's body was found beneath the window of his office in the Foreign Ministry. Officially it was called suicide.[2] But the strong presumption of Masaryk's murder is one of those undiscussable resentments buried in the minds of a nation, another symbol of the extinction of the democratic tradition in Czech socialism. During the period of the Prague Spring in 1968, the sudden availability of the archives of the Czech Communist Party to paths of enquiry formerly barred, and today barred once more, naturally renewed interest in the manner of Masaryk's death.

EDWARD TABORSKY: "I think probably the final outcome, when they finally reveal everything (although many things will probably be lost meanwhile), will probably conclude by saying that Masaryk was disposed of by the Soviet Secret Police.

There is some evidence for it. There was disorder in Masaryk's room. The argument is that had he wanted to commit suicide he would have taken pills and certainly would not jump from a window in his bathroom, which was so hard to have access to. I talked to Dr Klinger, who was his personal physician, and he brought some evidence about this.

He noted, for instance, that Masaryk's clothing was soiled—which is an indication that he was in fear of his life and might have had some struggle. There were plenty of cigarettes in his room which seemed to have been smoked not only by Masaryk but by other people. And the doorman in the building where Masaryk had his apartment saw some people coming in. And so I think that when they began to examine all that in 1968, they were obviously coming to the conclusion that he did not commit suicide but was simply disposed of. But before they could do it of course it was stopped, and the Soviet invasion came. Then they produced something which is also indicative of guilt. They said it was neither suicide nor anything else. It was just sheer accident. He just fell from the window by accident—which is the least likely explanation."

—You know that room and that window?

TABORSKY: "I know that apartment, yes. I was there several times!"

THE CZECH COUP—following the promulgation of the Marshall Plan and the formation of the Cominform—was among the last milestones on the road to the protracted period of the Cold War.

Stalin's decision to refuse the American offer of Marshall Aid, originally intended for the economic salvation of all of Europe, was on the grounds that it was aimed at the political and economic system of the Soviet Union. This was the final notice from him that Europe was to be divided into two implacably hostile camps, ideologically opposed. That settled the argument for the countries of East and Central Europe, who had hoped to keep bridges open between the two. What would today be called "Finlandisation" was henceforth for them a dead issue.

Within the Soviet Bloc, the next five years were devoted to the vilification of heresies. Greatest among these was held to be "Titoism", in Yugoslavia. The Marshall Plan and the Tito heresy set the stage for the coercive parables of the Show Trials, which sealed the fate of the so-called "Westerners" in the Communist Parties. One of these "Westerners" was Eugen Loebl, the Czech Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade in Gottwald's Communist government.

LOEBL: "Even Gottwald was afraid of Moscow because, don't forget, this was at the same time as the Yugoslav events. I was asked by Gottwald to work out an analysis of our future economic development; I advocated close cooperation with the West, and Gottwald was very, very much in favour of that. As far as the Marshall Plan is concerned, there were two views in our *Politburo* and also in the Polish *Politburo*. At that time by chance, Minc (who was the economic dictator of Poland) was in Czechoslovakia, and he was all for the Marshall Plan being accepted. I wrote a paper for Gottwald: I thought we could be better off if we remained in between. I figured out that with our uranium ore, if we go on to the open market we could be the most developed country in Europe at that time."

—If Czechoslovakia maintained control of its uranium mines . . . ?

LOEBL: "Yes. Just to sell it at world prices, you see. When Mikoyan asked us to orient the majority of our foreign trade towards the East, he wanted to pay a very low price for uranium ore. I refused, I broke up the negotiations. Stalin interfered, and accepted actually all that I asked for. So we thought, well, each country's entitled to fight for its own interests—and I thought I had won a great victory, and so did Gottwald."

[2] See Richard Mayne, "Prague's Cruel Spring", ENCOUNTER, May 1983.

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—But in ideological terms it perhaps sealed your fate—your position on that particular issue was a direct challenge to the Soviet Union, a violation of fraternal. . . .

LOEBL: "But, you see, there is where I was wrong. I simply believed that a Marxist country can't do what a Marxist country does. It was just a belief that a Marxist country cannot be imperialist."

IN THE SAME MONTH of the Czech coup (February 1948), Tito was summoned to Moscow by Stalin. But he refused to go, sending Edward Kardelj, a member of his *Politburo*, instead. Kardelj's memoirs were published in 1982, and he recalls that when he arrived in Moscow, Molotov threw a document in front of him and said, "Sign this!" "I picked it up", said Kardelj, "and read that our two countries, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, would be obliged to consult each other on all matters of foreign policy. My blood boiled, and I felt that not only I was being insulted and humiliated, but also the whole of Yugoslavia."

Tito refused to come to heel. Among the more remarkable information now available is the knowledge of how Stalin then prepared to invade Yugoslavia—and why he stopped short. One of those involved in planning this undertaking was the Hungarian General, Bela Kiraly.

KIRALY: "I was the designated commander of the army which was supposed to invade Yugoslavia. The Hungarian Army was supposed to break through between the Danube and the Tisza river, create a bridgehead on the Danube, and stop there. The privilege of invading the heretic capital, Belgrade, was reserved for the Soviet Union. In other words, everything was prepared. What saved Tito against the military invasion was the Korean War. America stood up. Consequently, they assumed that if they invaded Yugoslavia, America will stand up again. I'm absolutely convinced of that. Because what we did was not a war manoeuvre, it was a systematic build-up, a systematic preparation of the war which was supposed to come sometime, in 1951 or something like that."

—Do you think the Soviet acquisition of the atomic bomb in 1949 accelerated Stalin's schedule?

KIRALY: "Absolutely sure. I mean, in the sense that it gave to Stalin a kind of security that the Soviet Union was no longer a target which could not reciprocate in kind, you know."

—Then, how influential was the fact that the Soviet Union did not possess the atomic weapon between 1945 and 1949, and was in that sense strategically weak? How far does that, to you, explain Stalin's often remarked and much discussed essential caution in his exploitation of the situation in Eastern Europe?

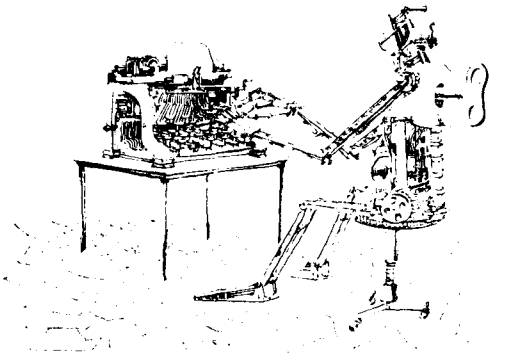
KIRALY: "What you really ask in that question is really, I would say, a statement which absolutely justifies what I'm saying. He prepared the war against Tito. But when he saw that his war—because, after all, the Korean War was Stalin's war through proxies—when he saw that even in Korea the Russian advance, the Soviet advance, met a very determined American resistance, he expected that too in Yugoslavia. Stalin did not want to have his soldiers shoot at Americans, no."

FOLLOWING YUGOSLAVIA's declaration of independence, Stalin's Cold War against Tito meant that, within the pale, any sympathisers or rival influences, real or imagined, had to be eliminated.

In Hungary in 1949, Laszlo Rajk, the Minister for the Interior (who had supervised the rigged elections and been the chief surgeon of "salami tactics") was arrested. He became the chief accused, and Tito's chief accuser, at a major political trial indistinguishable from the numbing audacity of the Moscow trials of the 1930s, where "everything was true but the facts."

Laslo Rajk was in the hands of the interrogators for three months, duly confessed, and was in the end hanged. Bela Szasz was a principal witness, and himself a victim of the Rajk Trial.

SZASZ: "Laszlo Rajk was one of the few Hungarian Communists who were never in Moscow—except for a three-day visit. They could not choose 'Muscovites' who were Hungarian leaders, because then they would have said abroad that British and American intelligence are so strong that they could penetrate even the lines of the Russians and organise spies in Moscow itself. But they had to choose a Hungarian leader, and Matyos Rakosi always regarded Rajk as one of his greatest rivals. Rajk was a very good-looking young man, Rakosi was not. And Rajk had a certain power base among the peasants, among those young intellectuals who



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came from the peasantry. Because in Hungary there was a so-called People's Colleges organisation, and Rajk was patron of this. He had a power base of which Rakosi was very jealous."

—And the real reason for the Rajk trial?

SZASZ: "I think there were several reasons. First of all, Stalin wanted to hold these satellite countries on a shorter rein. Secondly, he wanted to eliminate everybody whom he suspected could organise or could resist something. Thirdly, he wanted to hit Tito, who had left the Moscow Camp. Fourthly, maybe this idea of human sacrifice. . . ."

—Blood sacrifice?

SZASZ: "Blood sacrifice, yes. Sufficient for him to drive fear into the whole people that no deviation would be tolerated."

STALIN'S UNLEASHING of this modern inquisition began in Budapest with the Rajk trial, and continued in Prague. In Czechoslovakia, Stalin enlarged the categories of those who were now considered "dangerous" and were therefore disposable. Eugen Loebl was one of the Communists who confessed at the Slansky Show Trials in Prague in 1952.

LOEBL: "It was, first of all, Tito. There were very good ties between Czechoslovakia and Tito. Gottwald's daughter was married to a high official in the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It went even so far—it had been a great love affair in Moscow during the War. So the Soviets were afraid that Czechoslovakia might choose Tito's road. My interrogators—Czech, Slovak, and Soviet interrogators—took part in the preparation and direction of the Rajk trial. They made witnesses say that there was a very strong Tito movement in Hungary, but the centre of it was in Czechoslovakia. So, with this information, Stalin approached Gottwald and offered him help. The very same Soviet interrogators came to Czechoslovakia to discover all the ties and connections of the Titoist movement between Hungary and Czechoslovakia and between Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia."

—So Stalin decided personally?

LOEBL: "Stalin decided personally, and Gottwald accepted personally."

—In your view, how and when did Stalin decide?

LOEBL: "It was before the Rajk trial, and I think that one of the tasks of the Rajk trial was to be the overture for this drama."

—Who was it who sorted out the victims for these purges—the Czech authorities, or the KGB *(then the* NKVD*), the Soviet Secret Police)?*

LOEBL: "I think the *KGB* gave the general direction. For instance, at the beginning I was supposed to be sentenced as a 'Slovak bourgeois nationalist', and the heads of it would have been Clementis and Husak. But they changed it. They wanted to have also a *Czech* Titoist movement. I witnessed all that. When I confessed after fourteen months, I always had to change the confession—because what was one day a crime, was the next day not a crime. But it was the Soviet political line.

I would say the other cause of the trial has the following political background. The Soviets were all out for Israel. They hoped that the Israeli Left-wing government and Left-wing intellectuals would be the ideal outpost for the Soviets in the Near East. And I remember that I once spoke with Andrei Vyshinsky. Egypt wanted to buy a whole factory to produce guns, and Vyshinsky opposed it. He said, 'Nothing to Egypt, only to Israel.' When Israel refused to play the Soviet game—and the Soviet strategic goal was to have a foothold in the Near East—the only alternative was to make friends with the Arabs, and in order to make friends with the Arabs, they had to prove their anti-Semitism and the anti-Zionist line, and in order to give credibility and force, they took 'the Jewish intellectual', Slansky, Secretary-General of the Czech Communist Pary."

THE OFFERING UP of such raw material for vivisection at the Show Trials produced the terror which effectively bound Eastern Europe to Stalin's command for the time being. We have, again at first hand, evidence of the cruelties by which these bizarre confessions were produced.

BELA SZASZ: "We entered an enormous room, where Gabor Peter, then the chief of the Hungarian Secret Police, sat at a table—a table which was formed like a capital T. I was put at the foot of the T and the first question from Gabor Peter was, *'Who is Wagner?'* I thought of the musician, I thought of different people; and, well, it occurred to me that we had a consul in the Foreign Office in Czechoslovakia who was called Wagner. I told him. *'What did Wagner tell you to tell Szönyi?'* Szönyi was then a high Party official and Chief of the Cadre Department. I couldn't understand this. And then they brought in Szönyi, who looked very tired. Peter said, 'Did Szasz give you a message from Wagner?' So he says 'Yes'. 'What message did he give?' He said something, and slowly I found out that this Wagner was nobody else in their story but Allen Dulles, who was (at the time when Szönyi was in

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Switzerland) the US representative of Intelligence who was supposed to organise this group of Szönyi's into a spy group."

—Wagner was the code name for Allen Dulles, the head of the CIA?

SZASZ: "Yes, that's it. I absolutely denied it, and then Gabor Peter said, 'Well, *bastinado* for him.' And then I got the first *bastinado*. Later I got more."

—What happens in a "bastinado"?

SZASZ: "Well, you have to lie on your stomach. Two or three people sit on you, and your feet are naked. They hold your feet and they get rubber truncheons . . . they hit your feet, the soles of your feet. And so much so. About 25 times each. I got 25, around 35 times. And my skin was really completely—it was like a beefsteak, my feet. And I had to stand on these feet for nine days and nine nights without food, without water, to make me confess. But I denied them this pleasure."

—Then what happened?

SZASZ: "When I came to the chief first, into his ante-room, there was a Hungarian who served in the *NKVD*, Colonel Szucs. And he told me there a great speech, that I have to 'help the Party.' They know very well that I am not a criminal. When I make my confession they will take me away in a few months time and I will have a beautiful time in the Crimea. Then I will come back and they will let me do whatever I want, and so on and so on. But you have to confess. You have to help the Party. You have to help to strike a blow at the imperialist circle and their servant Tito.

—In the account you've written of this, you say that at one stage, "to incriminate others I scribbled for several nights" after the NKVD *man had said, "For the time being it's enough for you to write down who could have been a spy. Later we shall see who was." The point is, your interrogators don't really know what it is they wish you to confess to . . . and you don't know what it is that you're being asked to agree took place?*

SZASZ: "Yes. The secret policeman told me that, 'for the time being it is enough you write down on that paper who could have been a spy.' I wrote down names, mainly people who were abroad. He wasn't pleased, and I got beaten again. This very hard beating, and this standing for nine days and so on, it went on for nearly two months. We got very little food. Soup, or two slices of bread every day. That is one method to break people, to underfeed them. Break them physically, break them psychologically. Then they will be ready to sign anything to get rid of the tortures. Accept everything, only to get rid of the torture.

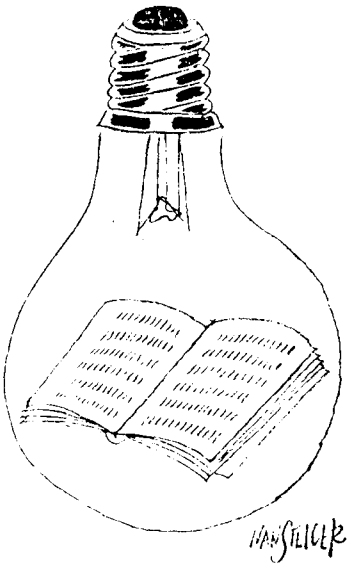
THOSE WHO HAD DEDICATED themselves to the Party were called upon to be deaf to the call of pity, to ignore truth, and deny justice. All that mattered was to be objectively right. And all that was objective and all that was right was laid down by the Party. The interrogations and "confessions" were the ultimate revelation of "means and ends"—the exacting of obedience to the Party, which was one man: Stalin.

EUGEN LOEBL: "They had all the material on my life. The only thing they wanted me to say was that whatever I did, I did it as an enemy of the Party, or mankind, or Czechoslovakia, or the Soviet Union."

—It was made clear to you right from the beginning that this deposition you wrote out—this story of your life—was going to form the basis of an indictment?

LOEBL: "At that time I had an illusion. I thought it was also the basis of my rehabilitation, because I could prove that I have not done anything which was in conflict with any law, or with the interests of the Party or with any order of the Party. So at the beginning I thought that . . . well (I was a rather successful Minister), that enemies wanted to eliminate me and give false testimony. Only after two weeks, when the Soviet interrogators started interrogating me, then I knew that is the end."

—Can you explain the process by which a deposition, as in your own case, is converted into an indictment which provides the basis for a show trial?



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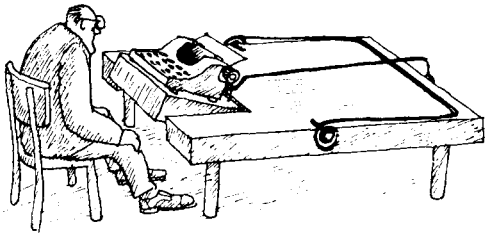
LOEBL: "I was not supposed to sit down. I had to stand sixteen hours a day, in the cell. They did not bring me at all to the fresh air, so I was always in the cell. For interrogation I could not sit down, I had to stand. During the night they woke me up each five or six minutes to get up from my bed and report. 'Prisoner 1473 reports. One prisoner, everything is in order.' After two, three, or four nights I always fell asleep immediately after such a report. Being wakened out of a deep sleep played havoc with the nerves. I was not allowed to read, not allowed to write, not allowed to smoke. I was always hungry (although it was not a starvation diet).

And the greatest force and the greatest pain was caused by time. The day had no end. Just to walk, after a few days—each step was painful, and each minute was endless. So the combination of physical pain and tremendous boredom creates a situation where you yourself feel, and try to persuade yourself, to give up all values, forget about what is right and wrong. The only thing is to have the right to sit down, smoke a cigarette, read something. Even if you are sentenced to life, as long as you can sit—this seemed to be the greatest desire and dream. What they achieve is to demoralise. And they have time, you see. If they would have beaten me up—and if I would have given in, under pain—well, one day pain disappears, and I would deny it all again. But here I had to convince myself, and in this demoralised state of affairs (and this *is* a process of demoralisation) I confessed to whatever they wanted.

I did not even dream, at the trial, of telling the truth. In a sense I was afraid that somebody else (say, Slansky) could deny it, and then I would have to choose between the alternatives again, to be honest or dishonest. I could sit down; I could smoke; I could read something. And I knew that if I would do something which would be in accordance with my values that I would be exposed again to such a situation, and would end up with giving in, again. So it was definitely not a brain-washing. Nothing like Koestler assumes. It was brutal force combined with a sophisticated method: how to demoralise you. This happened to all the defendants, and that is why we all became very willing tools of the interrogators."

—How long did this take?



LOEBL: "Being a fool, I took it for fourteen months. I should have given in after two months. There were many times I just wanted to give in and confess everything. But then I saw my interrogator, and had such a feeling of hatred, such a feeling that he should not triumph over me—so again I denied everything. But it took all of fourteen months. But I would like to say very frankly it is a process of demoralisation; and I think this is also the policy of the Soviets with regard to all oppressed nations. They put the emphasis on the process of demoralisation, because dictatorship needs a demoralised people. Democracy dies, and goes to pieces, if people hold to no moral values."

THE POST-WAR TRIALS brought to the surface the inner character of the political system which Lenin and Stalin had created, and which produced (in Bela Szasz's description) "volunteers for the gallows."

SZASZ: "I suppose one could distinguish three different stages of this interrogation. The first stage was to break this man or this woman (there were a few women), to make a prefabricated element out of him which will be part of a building, the whole Show Trial. The second stage was to bring these prefabricated elements into some relation and make of it a kind of basic edifice. The third was to beautify this edifice, to make the 'Show Trial' complete and whole as a story, and to smooth out the contradictions. Which they didn't do, of course. Even in print I am named once as an English agent, once as an American. They were full of inconsistencies."

—In your account of this trial, you are brought face to face with Rajk as somebody who's provided part of the evidence at the trial which is to lead to his condemnation and sentence to death. When you are brought face to face with him, your former friend, you say: "Looking into Rajk's tired eyes, I realised that he knew he had come to the end of the road, and that he was doomed. . . ."

SZASZ: "Yes. And to show me that he does not mind whatever I say—because I did not make a confession against him—he signed every page of the protocol, even those pages which he should not have signed. And he signed at least 50, possibly 100. So the interrogator told him, 'Ah, you know very well how one has to do it.' And he signed every page. He wanted to show me he does not mind whatever I say about him. I should not suffer therefore; I could say whatever I wanted. He did it with a look—signing every page and looking at me."

—You say also, "In the end, Rajk accepted the golden bridge offered to his self-respect." What do you mean by that?

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SZASZ: "In the beginning Rajk, definitely, was extremely strongly tortured. And they told him the same thing as they told me, as well as others who did not confess—that he should help the Communist Party, and that with his sacrifice, with his political and moral suicide, he helps the Communist Party. He accepted this golden bridge. That is what I said. And perhaps he really regarded it as a sacrifice for the Party. Maybe he was no longer a believer. Maybe he simply gave up everything after the deceptions he suffered."

—The Rajk Trial took place in 1949. It wasn't until seven years afterwards that the evidence of secret tapes of a conversation between Kadar, Hungary's present leader, and Rajk were revealed. What can you tell us about that?

SZASZ: "The taped conversation discloses that Kadar told Rajk: 'Comrade Rakosi sends me to you, and we know very well that you are not a spy, not a conspirator, but you have to make this sacrifice for the Communist Party because we are in such-and-such a situation.' And Rajk discussed the whole thing with him in a very angry way. But, in the end, apparently Kadar convinced him, or at least—we never know what happens inside a man—he accepted. Maybe because he wanted to build a bridge for his self-esteem."

THESE EVENTS and their many victims of 30 years ago in Eastern Europe have no special claim upon us because of pain or suffering. These were men who had drawn the sword of a creed which devoured them. They were in many instances men who had forfeited the right to protest against torture, or secret prisons, or organised lying, for they had indulged them. They were not apostles of independence or nationalism. They were indeed shadowy heroes. But in prison, men like Eugen Loebl were forced to confront the consequences of their own beliefs.

LOEBL: "I had to kill the time somehow in those endless days, so I started to think. I wanted to know whether all that I saw, all that I heard, people crying who had been beaten and so on, whether all this was a deviation of Marxism or whether it is built-in. I wanted to know whether I was co-responsible for what happened, or whether I was an innocent victim. I was hoping only that my conclusion would be that I am an innocent victim, that with all great ideologies it happens that, once applied, it could be misused."

—What conclusion did you come to? Were you as guilty of your situation as those who inflicted it upon you?

LOEBL: "Well, if my answer is that these dehumanised and inhumane activities or features are inbuilt in Marxism, then I am co-responsible. Because I advocated Marxism, I persuaded many people to become Marxists; I fought for Marxism.

But if Marxism is an ideology that leads towards, and is an avenue to, a humane society, then I am just an innocent victim and it is just my personal tragedy. It took a few months until I came to the conclusion that Marxism, everything I believed in, is a most inhumane philosophy, and in whatever form it is applied will result in an inhumane society. Consequently I am co-responsible for my fate as well. I cannot blame anybody but myself. If they hadn't imprisoned me, I would have been instrumental in bringing other people to the situation in which I am."

—Can you put a figure to the number of people, the number of individuals, who were directly affected by the Purge Trials?

LOEBL: "There were many thousands, I think. Many thousands. Not all were in prison, naturally, but dismissed from work. And their families. Thousands were imprisoned."

UTOPIA IN POWER stood symbolised in the Show Trials as a quintessential mendacity. A pervasive cynicism took hold and began to heighten and widen and deepen throughout Eastern Europe.

Today, if one looks at the political geology of Stalin's fracturing monolith, one can see a rising, expanding seam of intellectual challenge to the basic tenets of the Communist faith. This critique has come from within the ranks of communism—ranging from Milovan Djilas and his political assault on "the New Class", to the devastating historical and philosophical examination by one of the most formidable contemporary minds, Leszek Kolakowski. It points in one direction only: to the decline of that hold on the mind and soul once exercised by the Soviet Union, which has accompanied the eclipse of its ideology.

(A third article will appear in the next number of ENCOUNTER.)

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"I'M SORRY, he's in a meeting." How often have you had that brush-off when telephoning somebody's office? "Well, get him out of it" is the right response; but few of us make it. He's in purdah, retreat, a monastery, a trance; there's no disturbing him—even if we suspect that his secretary-watchdog, with eyes as big as saucers, has instructions to put everyone off. A meeting has *mana*, a sacred aura: wise men sitting in a circle or a hollow square, enacting the rite, repeating the incantation, trying to read the omens. It's this, rather than fear of inconvenience, that gives the guardian of the temple so much power.

Once in a meeting yourself, you recognise humdrum reality. Group dynamics are at work, undoubtedly, but magic is rare. An urgent subject—say, the Cuban missile crisis; a really charismatic chairman; a gathering of articulate geniuses or creative wits: these can sometimes transfigure the collective transaction, give the sensation of a vivid dream or of floating several feet above the ground. Savour those epiphanies. There won't be many in a lifetime. For the most part you'll be stuck with pompous mediocrity, and a sadly inefficient way of getting anything done. The bigger the group, the worse it is. With ten people, each wanting a say and taking five minutes to complete it, one minor topic can easily waste an hour. For twenty people, double it. Add linguistic differences, and you'd better earmark 10% more of your time. Include certain voluble nationalities, and you can write off at least half a day.

"I have a pretty large experience of boys", said Dickens's Mr Jaggers to Pip of the *Great Expectations*, "and you're a bad set of fellows." I could say the same of committees and their meetings, from the humblest to the most august. I've always felt the need for some sort of Dr Spock's guide to steer me through the experience—the equivalent, perhaps, of Wyndham Lewis's great treatise, *The Art of Being Ruled*. Part of it might be renamed *The Art of Being Over-ruled*.

THE NOVELS OF C. P. Snow provide some inklings, as does Antony Jay's pioneering field study, *Corporation Man*. But there still seems room for more first-hand reporting and a systematic effort to hack a trail through the bush. What follows, therefore, is a mini-handbook for anyone lucky enough to have escaped committees so far, but whose luck has now at last run out.

THE FIRST HAZARD is finding the right room. This is the inaugural meeting, so the receptionist may not know your committee, and certainly won't know you. Very likely, then, you'll be late, and find most of the others waiting. "Ah", someone will say, meaning "At long last"; and they'll surge to their places round the table. You may recognise some of them. Others will be strangers, even if identified by name-plates: from where you're sitting you'd need a periscope to read them. Everyone looks intent and competent; what's more, they all seem to know each other. The chairman, of course, is the most intent, competent, and omniscient—or so it seems.

There are three types of chairmen, all mutually exclusive: the weak, the strong, and the good. For present purposes, the good chairman can be ignored: you may never meet him anyway. The weak chairman, as speechwriters might put it, is a challenge and an opportunity—a challenge to the timetable, but an opportunity for someone else to take the lead. The strong chairman is undiluted poison. With Wotan in command, why bother with a committee?

As you begin to assess your colleagues, you'll be struck by their funny way of talking. Committees are like television: they focus attention on faces, voices, and mannerisms. There's the elaborately languid, from the Deep South or (in Britain) the West country, rolling out the sentences with a rustic burr and folksy tricks with the eyebrows. There's the sharp snapdragon civil servant, spectacles glinting, jargon at the ready, and a speech-tune which implies "It stands to reason." There's the academic ditherer, eternally speculating on-the-one-hand and on-the-other, like an indecisive palmist. There's the Plain Man or Practical Woman, dredging up anecdotes to confute a hypothesis, stubbornly clinging to the past. There's the cadenza expert, all statistics and flights of fancy, a dazzling soloist who leaves everyone tired and unenlightened. There's Mr Grumpyman (or Mrs Sourpuss), often a bureaucrat with two problems for every solution. There's Pigling Bland, on the best of vapid terms with everybody. There's Dr Must-Dash, always leaving early for another committee. There's Kelly ("Has-anybody-here-seen" Kelly), who seldom turns up at all.

Whatever their personal oddities, they all share COMMITTEESPEAK. If the chairman's a peer, some may call him "My Lord Chairman"; but since this sounds pompous or toadying, many will say "Shaman" instead. "On a point of order" is a phrase beloved of amateur politicians—including

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members of the legislature; so is the menacing "With great respect." Mock diffidence is mandatory. "It seems to me"—"I wonder if we ought not to"—"Might there not be a case for"—"Have we adequately considered"—"One argument which might be advanced"—"Could it not be said that"—"Perhaps some attention should be given to".... Aw, gee, fellers, can't you say "I think"?

No: in committee, do as the committed do. You may crack a smile now and then by dropping into demotic language; but be sparing with the jokes or informality. If you want to cut ice with the committee, you have to follow a few simple rules.

1. *Never miss a meeting.* Come late, if need be, or leave before the end: but never forget that *les absents ont toujours tort.* If possible, be in your place first, and stay behind afterwards to chat with the secretariat; margins can carry messages, in meetings as well as books.

2. *Always study the minutes.* Whatever was said, however cogently, is only as good as its written record. Make sure that the record's straight.

3. *Recruit support.* If the meeting's going badly, or you're in a minority, it's no good being right all alone. Butter up some sympathetic colleagues; if necessary, have private meetings; for the committee, plan a concerted strategy.

4. *Where appropriate, prepare a paper.* Here, mock diffidence may help. Propose the idea of a paper, then let someone else suggest that you should write it. Feign reluctance, but accept. Presenting it, stress that it's the merest first draft—however much you've polished it. Include a few small controversial details on which to make concessions, to distract attention from your main purpose, which may thus get by on the nod.

5. *In discussion, aim off for wind.* Marksmen have to: why not you? Put your case, but draw a practical conclusion slightly more extreme than your real objective. Not too much, for fear of overkill and ridicule; but just enough to make possible gracious recognition that your critics have a point. Allow *them* to propose what *you* are after, then announce that on reflection you've changed your mind.

6. *Wear your learning lightly.* The best of all positions, in any *métier*, is that of the brilliant amateur whose real profession is something else. An actor or writer who's really an academic, or vice versa, can carry prestige like contraband across the frontier between his two lives. Several practitioners I know would be nobodies without a second string to their bows. As it is, their colleagues in either profession are dazzled by the other, which they don't understand. This, of course, is the secret of Dr Must-Dash.

7. *Don't bore the chairman.* The strong chairman is never bored: he's too self-important and overbearing. The weak chairman likewise: he's too busy scrabbling to keep things together. But the good chairman recognises potential rivals. So keep it short, and crisp, and helpful. Know your place. Even with Bertie Wooster, Jeeves was the real winner; and he never overstepped the mark.

NOW LET'S TURN the tables. Suppose that you're not a neophyte, but a celebrated member of the great and the good. In Britain, you may be in line for a knighthood or the Upper House; in the United States, there may be political prospects or a vacancy on the Supreme Court. One day, you receive a delicate summons. The Government, or the Administration, has been shamed into setting up a Royal or Presidential commission: let's say it's to appease public concern about the police. How should they be trained? Should they be divided into plain-clothes and uniformed officers? What weapons should they carry? How should they patrol the streets? What relationship should there be between them and private security firms? All

transaction books

UNNATURAL DEATHS IN THE USSR 1928–54

by Iosif Dyadkin

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these questions have been aired in the press and on television; some of them have caught the interest of muck-raking politicians. Reforming groups, meanwhile, have been raising broader, deeper issues. What services should the police offer? How should they be accountable to the public? What additional needs are unfulfilled?

The powers that be resent all this interference: they don't want a commission to inquire into things at all. But the pressure's too strong for them. To save their skins, they give in. A commission's to be appointed: its task is to look into the police and the community's needs, including law and order—a remit vague enough to cover all the concerns so far expressed. Now comes the problem, and the feeler that's been extended in your direction. If you were offered the job of chairing the commission, how would you approach your role?

BY DEFINITION, you're a safe choice, a paid-up pillar of the establishment. As such, you make reassuring noises. Oh, yes: you recognise the need for a responsible, well-considered report; nothing could be worse than giving currency to ill-founded criticism, or raising unrealistic expectations. You'll need time to consider the matter. But, on the whole, you would regard it as an extremely valuable exercise, and one which it would be a privilege to help conduct.

It's in the bag! He's our man, say the powers that be; and they proceed to appoint you, together with the commission's ordinary members. Most are predictable middle-of-the-roaders, mild reformists balanced by mild reactionaries: but, as in every Constable painting, there has to be a token spot of red. So one or two people are recruited from more radical pressure-groups—one of them may well be a woman, to help stem charges of male chauvinism, timidity, or what you will.

Now you face your challenge (and opportunity): how to steer your commission in the direction you want. Let's be fair—you're not opposed to *all* reforms. You're keen, quite conscientiously, to do a good job . . . on the terms in which you conceive it. You may even be angry with die-hard defenders of the *status quo*. But you have your own ideas on the subject; and those are what you're determined the commission should endorse. So what do you do?

THE ANSWER IS that you run away with the ball. Before the Commission even meets, you get together with the secretariat to draft a series of questionnaires to the interested parties—chiefly, the police themselves. At the first meeting, you accept amendments; but you can afford to: you've won the first round. More than that, you've virtually fixed the match by controlling the agenda. The questions you're asking are all *"how"* questions: how can the police improve their training, their efficiency, their conviction rate, their image. All very important, but none of them asks *what* the police are for, *what* they should be doing, *what* the public ideally wants from them, *what* steps might be taken to prevent more crime. Big, philosophical issues, you feel: airy-fairy, prone to heady abstractions, political speechifying, emotional hot air.

Individually, the Commission's radical members may try to raise them, may call for an analysis of the task before them in line with the general remit. But it's easy to answer them. This Commission has a very serious and urgent task. The police have grave responsibilities; they face daily dangers; they are open to all sorts of political attack. Our duty, ladies and gentlemen, is to help society by proposing sensible, practical reforms—and we have an enormous mass of work in front of us, evidence to study, witnesses to examine, a report to write, without engaging in an academic exercise which would only complicate matters still more.

The chances are you'll convince a majority. Even if you don't—on this or other issues—you have another weapon up your sleeve: the minutes. When the Commission agrees with you, they can record a decision. When it doesn't, they can merely report a debate. Occasionally, a rebel may seek to correct the secretariat's (and your) interpretation of what went on last time. But you can turn that too into a further debate.

And you can divide-and-conquer. Never let caucuses form: see that the name-plates round the table are distributed at random, and differently every time. Take one or another rebel aside to plead for quicker progress, or to threaten resignation if privately caught out in a procedural lapse. But don't hobnob generally. Avoid the Commission members before the meetings, and sit at the head of the long table, never in the middle of one side. When in trouble, finally, blind your Commission with detail. Always remember: you're the boss.

FANTASY, you say? A malicious fairy-tale? Nothing of the sort. I've disguised my sources: but every one of these techniques, to my certain knowledge, has been used on a Royal Commission in Britain. Which? That'd be telling: but I'll say this. The "police" example was chosen to mislead.

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NOTES & TOPICS

London Commentary

The Pearly Kings of Peace

By Edward Pearce

THE ISSUE OF nuclear defence is finally being joined after an indefensibly long lapse of time during which the disarmers have had the field to themselves. As Vladimir Bukovsky pointed out over a year ago, "Anti-War" campaigns have a way of moving in cycles. There was an outburst of spontaneous protest from "Car-Park Attendants for Peace" and their equivalents in the late 1940s—a period when the follies of Yalta and Potsdam were being mitigated by the creation of NATO and the establishment of a United States force in Western Europe. That protest was a crude and all too obviously Soviet-front affair; and the respectable element which now forms a majority within the Campaign was not then formidable.

Then there was CND Mark 1 with its clergymen, philosophers, and lady novelists, which flourished in the late 1950s and early '60s. It was an important force, and briefly took the majority on a motion at the Labour Party Conference, only to be checked by the main force of Hugh Gaitskell's will-power. (That is not the sort of thing to be found these days in the debris of Healey and Co., for whom conviction of any kind is a melody no longer heard.) But CND Mark 1 coincided with the Polaris deal, something which the Soviet Union vehemently objected to on strategic grounds.

That time round, the innocents again formed the majority. They marched to and from Aldermaston. They gathered about the plinth in Trafalgar Square. Profile-proud clergy addressed them much as Monsignor Bruce Kent does today. But when Polaris was established, when no strategic development could be impeded, the fever and the organisation died away precisely as they had on the previous occasion. Each time, the actual accomplishment of a military rearrangement (which was supposed to destroy us, reduce us to radio-active ashes, and/or to servility as running footmen of the Yankees) effectively terminated protest against it.

The moral objections which the disarmers proclaim are every cent as valuable *after* installation as before, if morality is what you are talking about—and some of my countrymen never seem to talk about anything else. But the good old cause has twice been cynically abandoned when the trick was lost, only to be revived when some new hand was to be played, some new bid was to be made. I would lay very short odds that when (as I trust they will be) Cruise and Pershing have been installed, there will be a similar cool switch-off by those in charge who, having tried a door, have found it barred.

Of the innocence and good faith of the peace-loving infantry on the public squares I have no doubt, any more than I have respect for that sort of emotional self-indulgence. An intelligent, rational debate would centre around Trident—where Dr David Owen has tried to place it. Here the issue is one of cost and utility, rather than morality. The sort of person who leaps up shrieking, as one woman did during a recent television debate, to say that it was monstrous, wicked, and unspeakable that we could even think of having such weapons, and that it was certain we should all be destroyed, is usually described by non-disarmers as "sincere but mistaken." I am inclined to call her, with all her kind, a naive, hysterical fool in a state of irrational panic. A bit too much deference is being paid to the sincerity of the shrill and hyperactive.

The case against the disarmers has been put, perhaps as well as it will ever be put, by Alun Chalfont in this journal. But he was rightly preoccupied with a strategic case. I would suggest that there is an even plainer case to make and one which affords the innocent disarmers fewer excuses for their attitude.

RECENT MOVES over new missiles are not only a response to a strategic expansion of strength, though they *are* that, to be sure. They are also an inescapable reply to a power-ploy intended to measure the West. The SS-20s matter for their military edge as they menace Western cities, but they are also a chess-player's gambit. They are proof of the Soviet Union's ability to under-live and out-spend its enemies. With 15% minimum of GDP spent on military budgets against the British 3% and the US 5%, and coming as they did in the late 1970s when President Carter was signalling US weakness to the world, they were intended to create a new generation of creative defeatists. They would inspire those people who recognised power,

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perceived that the Soviets possessed it, and would form their policies accordingly. It had been, after all, the British and West German Governments who were desperate to offset this new increment, and Social Democratic and Labour governments who had set the process in motion to buy Chevaline and do the groundwork for Trident.

Nothing is being said or done by Mr Reagan or Mr Shultz which goes beyond meeting those requests. The Americans have reverted to a very modest *status quo*, expensive though it is. Indeed, the rhetoric of Ronald Reagan is a good deal more temperate than the much-praised eloquence of John F. Kennedy. The US government is meeting an increment with an increment, a threat with a balance to that threat. If they should fail to do so, if we in Europe lose our nerve and beg them not to install Cruise and Pershing, a message will go out from us to the Soviets: "Your devil is stronger than our devil."

The Soviets, despite the calamitous failure of their economy to give the citizen in work a standard of living better than the Western unemployed of, say, 40 years ago, have the inestimable advantage of taking their decisions unquestioned, and of being able to sacrifice the quality of life of the no-account citizen to the fortnightly installation of a new SS-20 free from all public pressure. The language of socialism is indeed "about priorities."

Accordingly, Western economic superiority and resources are offset by the lucid, untrammelled self-interest of a despotism. We have had similar experience with other despotisms. And CND, with its self-pitying horror stories, frequently smells of spilt Munich. The unilateralists must not be flattered for their exquisite consciences, which they wear upon the sleeve in the manner of Pearly Kings. Their minds are concentrated upon nuclear war to the point where most of them would humbly sacrifice the freedoms under which they protest.

Interestingly, although the leaders and manipulators of CND made great play of their liberal poli-

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[1] In a letter to *The Times* (30 April 1983), E. P. Thompson indicated that he opposed going to Prague to join in the East-West peace meeting, worried as he was about "one-way propaganda" as against "two-way communication." But, in his quirky ideological way, he makes a strange symmetry out of the difficulties his movement encounters in London and in Prague. "Fortunately", he writes, offering faint praise to the Editor of *The Times*, "it is still possible, in the letter page, for a dissenting view to be registered. CND's observers, when attending Prague, are looking for a similar space." So if he gets a dissenting letter accepted by the Editor of *Rude Pravo*, then famous victories for peace and press freedom would have been won in East and West. All he needs now is to get Soviet radio and television to match generously the hundred hours he has had on the BBC and other Western media—and symmetry marches on.

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tical feelings on the subject of Poland, when it came to the dissolution of recently-won Polish freedoms E. P. Thompson referred to it as "a Polish solution to a Polish problem." Lose your will to make new installations for defence and some such native solution for your problems becomes the prospect.

The unilateralist crowd-in-the-streets (potentially the violent mob with which Chancellor Helmut Kohl may have to cope before the year is out) is a nether millstone grinding happily with the upper millstone of Soviet conventional superiority. That superiority, like the ring of SS-20s, aroused no audible protest among the peace-lovers when it was being established. I may be doing Professor Thompson a great injustice. Did he perhaps protest when he attended the Soviet-front World Peace Council in Sofia in 1979? I am sure so elevated a conscience must have done . . . if only for form's sake.[1]

WE ARE NOT SO MUCH testing strategy as testing will. Out of a victory for the Surrender Lobby of the "peace movements" comes a state of affairs already foreshadowed in the terrible, one-sided deals done in the days of *détente*, by which the West Germans pick up the pension bill of the *DDR* and release resources for Eastern military expenditure. Western Europe, fallen away somewhat from the days of Bevin, Adenauer and Monnet, looked for a long time in the 1970s to be subordinable. It seemed to have lost (especially in Germany) the nerve to live with a conflict, a confrontation, a "Cold War" which has never ceased to exist, despite the passionate, futile yearning of a losing side for its conclusion. The Soviets had *Sitzfleisch* and courage. We, it seemed, in the early days of Carter, did not.

We have come some distance from that perilous condition in having M. Mitterrand, Mrs Thatcher, and one hopes Herr Kohl, bring to their office the illusionless assumptions by which liberal and democratic Western Europe conducted itself in the years after the absorption of her Eastern neighbours. Liberal democracy, which Professor Thompson interestingly refers to as "Parliamentary fetishism", does not survive by wishing that things were otherwise than they are. The latest Andropov move over the counting of war-heads, though wholly disingenuous, is a tribute of sorts to the sovereign nations of Western Europe for being in tougher hands than they were.

But the crowds of hand-holding, fatuous ladies are still there to be activated at Greenham. The Leader of the Labour Party is preaching a line of abject retractional submission on Cruise and Pershing. The pressures are very great. For if one thing is surrendered who is so innocent as to sup-

. . . a critical look at the nature of socialism . . .

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pose that the giving-up stops there? Fail the Cruise test and you effectively fail all the next tests, and declare yourself unwilling to operate any real programme of defence. We are balanced, not upon the global sum of weapons and delivery systems, but upon the latest increment. One's position is like Lear's hundred knights reduced to fifty. *"Hear me, my lord. What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five. . . . ?" "What need one?"* Or, as the King's daughter, conclusively puts it, *"I pray you, father, being weak, seem so."*

Strength can be commonly given up in the manner of Lear, out of vanity; and no organisation which draws to it the support of the higher clergy is without that quality. Vanity indeed informs the whole supposition that if we in our weakness chose to be weaker we should induce sensible men, as responsive to idealistic pressure as Mr Andropov, to follow our example. "Blessed are the peacemakers", says the Monsignor to his reflection, "the meek shall inherit the earth . . . ." We have no influence except to elect to continue our long, boring, patience-demanding defence of ourselves in the manner which *has* worked, and *has* kept Western Europe out of war for 38 years. The means are amended from time to time, by this or that increment, by the latest Soviet ploy; but the essential defence turns upon very much the same courage which we had in 1949. It is all the peace we shall ever have, but it keeps us alive.

Western military manoeuvres are defensive manoeuvres. The Soviets know this, and new Soviet armaments constitute a perpetual probing. There are good reasons at least to understand Mr Kenneth Adelman's troublesome remark about the Geneva peace negotiations being "a sham." They will only cease to be a sham when the Soviets acknowledge that the adventure which they began has not paid off.

FOR THE PRESENT they have the happy knowledge that all attempts to balance their new instalments of strength will be howled at by a column of emotionally overwrought and menacing campaigners, whose protest is for internal consumption only. There was a good deal of frankly forked-tongued talk from the convenors of CND about equivalent groups in Eastern Europe, about the brave struggle, the ragged flame the none the less real presence of an Eastern balancing protest. Since which time anything that was real is in prison and anything that was set up by the régime has gone on tour in the West. END (European Nuclear Disarmament) was a spurious geographical expression.

I haver never felt any scrap of grudging respect for the driving spirits of the Surrender Lobby. Mr Heseltine does well to stress the political antecedents of some of that leadership. But who is or who is not a Communist Party member is far less important than the profound spirit of alienated anti-Westernism to be found in its ranks. A short-lived attempt was made to form a Conservative disarmament group, only for the organisers to admit that they were themselves all socialists, although any Conservative was welcome to join! With all their faults, which I do not usually spare, the Tories are still sound on wanting to defend the country. But they used not to have this to themselves. The Labour leaders from Clement Attlee down to Harold Wilson (in his careful way) were of us and with us. Indeed, Attlee and Bevin were a great deal less vulnerable to the flattering cajolery of Stalin than were Eden and Macmillan. Where have such men gone? Why does Labour so hate Europe (not the fallible institutions but the people), why is it so bigotedly anti-American?

That melancholy question needs a treatise for a reply but the Labour Party is in just such a condition: the mindless reflex which caused one delegate to shout "Nazi" at Willy Brandt during a Labour conference does not precisely rule, but it is at home. A party with its own brand-product King Lear dominates the ranks of nuclear disarmament, in the knowledge that the weakness which is to be conspicuously embraced will involve good riddance to the US, and the island's liberation from the Continentals!

The nicest sort are presumably dreaming of some sort of Swedish condition, from which the events at Sundsvall—where the Swedish navy mined the latest of a succession of probing Soviet submarines —will not awaken them. Swedish neutrality, like Irish neutrality, exists because *we* are not neutral, because the formidably armed Americans are not neutral. But such is the decline in the perceived balance between East and West that Admiral Gorchkov's Navy has begun to treat Sweden as home territory. It is quite right to do so; there is no arguing with strength, and the Soviets have never sought anything else: strength to overshadow all argument.

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A Special Book Section

Literature & Criticism

The Darkness beyond Words

Death of 1000 Typewriters—*By D. J. Enright*

As *A Social History of English* will show, *Slips of the Tongue* have become so common in both *Orality and Literacy* that instead of *Grammar and Good Taste* we virtually depend on *Nonverbal Communication Today*. Well, a reviewer always likes to show that the books he is dealing with can be said to "go together."

"Deep emotions are often aroused by issues of language": and no wonder when one has to cope with language like "triglossic . . . verbomotor lifestyle . . . grapholect . . . noetic economy . . . paralanguage and kinesics . . . onset time in noncoactive episodes." Dick Leith[1] has taken on more than can be safely contained within one set of covers: the development of English from the vernacular of "certain Germanic tribes" through contacts with Celtic, Norman French and Central French; a consideration of the distinction between "dialect" and "patois"; the importance of the 1611 Bible (distanced from everyday speech but lending dignity to the national language and presumably discouraging dialects) and of Johnson's *Dictionary*; the displacement of Latin in scientific writing . . . up to "The imposition of English in the British Isles" and (language follows the flag) "English overseas."

Leith is averse to authority, or what sounds like it, and dislikes the notion that some forms of language are superior to others. "Unfortunately, many people tend to treat dictionaries with reverence." Well, some people never open one. "Unfortunately, a great deal of public debate about words and their meanings is conducted in an atmosphere of prescriptivism." Unfortunately for this democratic view, many people without the benefit (as they see it) of a decent education *want* to know how to use words. And since "prescriptivism" is the only brake we have on the accelerating spread of chaos, let's find some other word for it, less reminiscent of the National Health Service. Here the argument runs thus: If people had followed the rules, we wouldn't have the word "glamour", created by "so-called careless usage", blurring the distinction between "r" and "l" in the word "grammar" (or in "gramarye", magic spells being once associated with learning). "We now have two words, with separate meanings, for the price of one", and so we shouldn't complain when the aforementioned usage blurs "disinterested" and "uninterested": you lose on the swings, you gain on the roundabouts. What our champions of *laissez-faire* ignore is the fact that today is *different* from the past in that language can be swiftly blurred or perverted on a huge scale, most notably through television. It took a thousand years for "lewd" to change meaning from "lay" ("unlearned"), by way of "worthless", to "lecherous." It took about three weeks for "hopefully" = "it is hoped" to conquer the world.

Though one would have expected otherwise of learned men, scholars are the worst offenders. By their cheerful indifference, indeed their purposeful slackness, they may be sowing new fields of professional endeavour for themselves, but they are laying rods in pickle for all of us. One of them has said, apropos of the fate of "disinterested", that if a word is needed for something then it will be found. If we had a word, and it disappeared, does that mean we don't want the thing?

Leith is strict, however, when it comes to sensitive spots. We mustn't use "coon"—true, we wouldn't even use it to say we shouldn't use it. We mustn't use "bent" or "queer"—fair enough. But we are exhorted to use "gay" on the grounds that it "has become instrumental in the cause of homosexual equality." The adjective has been wrenched out of its established meaning and stuffed

[1] *A Social History of English*. By Dick Leith. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £9.95, paper £4.95.

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by force into a patently inappropriate one. (Its euphemistic use in the past to indicate sexual immorality—a slang usage which never interfered with its main sense—hardly seems an additional qualification.) If a word is needed for something it will be found, but this one wasn't found, it was maladroitly stolen. So "authority", the authority of a minority, is OK here? But I wonder how many homosexuals are happy with the term.

WITH SO MUCH to cover, "The semantic disparagement of women" only gets two pages, but they are sensational. It has been estimated, Leith tells us, that there are "over 1000 words which in their history have denoted women and have also meant 'whore'." (I have thrown away my Roget, which gives fewer than 20.) Since patronising brothels and consorting with whores has generally been "socially taboo", a covert language was needed, including "even words like *nun* and *laundress*." Presumably nuns have had too much pride and laundresses too little clout to mount a counter-offensive. The conclusion arrived at via the changing fortunes of the word "buxom", originating as "bow-some" ("submissive") and later influenced perhaps by "bust", is this: "Men, it seems, have wanted women who are sexually submissive, and if possible comely and well-favoured too." Well, they would, wouldn't they?

HUMAN SOCIETY formed itself through oral communication, not written memos; only very late in its history did it become literate. Perhaps now, with television and its passion for gab shows and informal pontificating, we are returning to orality? If so, then the race is heading for its second childhood—helped by intellectuals, always to be found in the forefront of whatever movement.

Helped, it would seem, by Walter J. Ong, who points out—among other fascinating items—that of the thousands, tens of thousands, of languages spoken at one time or another, only around 106 have ever been discernibly committed to writing, and that of the some 3000 languages spoken today, only some 78 have a literature. "The basic orality of language is permanent", Ong states in this book he has written.[2] Homer and Plato are invoked of course; though not Denis Donoghue, who perhaps came too late with his apotheosis of conversation.

"Oral communication unites people in groups", Ong says, whereas "Writing and reading are solitary activities that throw the psyche back on itself": a truism which is considerably less than wholly and purely true. More interestingly: since the heroic and marvellous had the function of organising knowledge which nowadays is organised elsewise, he associates with writing/printing the transition from the hero to the anti-hero, from Achilles to John Updike's Rabbit. We may not all be consoled by his assurance that this situation "has nothing to do with a putative 'loss of ideals'."

Homer couldn't write, but what a powerful memory the man had! Ong observes of Homeric studies: "Nowhere do the contrasts between orality and literacy or the blind spots of the unreflective chirographic or typographic mind show in a richer context." Shouldn't he have said "*deaf* spots"?

That speech came before writing, like fingers before forks, surely none of us disputes; or (though, as Ong notes, it is difficult for "fully literate people" to imagine what a "primary oral culture" is like) that there has been great oral poetry. As for Plato, we wouldn't have known that he rated speech above writing—the latter being presumptuous enough to pretend that what can be only in the mind has been established outside it—if someone hadn't written him down. It is disconcerting to find that "literate" has become a dirty word—like "bent" and "queer." And there is no mention here of the Etruscans, or of Richard Wilbur's moving poem addressed to their poets:

> *Dream fluently, still brothers, who when young*
> *Took with your mothers' milk the mother tongue,*
>
> *In which pure matrix, joining world and mind,*
> *You strove to leave some line of verse behind*
>
> *Like a fresh track across a field of snow,*
> *Not reckoning that all could melt and go.*

Or of Emerson's remark, quoted in John Gross's *Oxford Book of Aphorisms*: "The book written against fame and learning has the author's name on the title-page."

I HAD ANTICIPATED Ong on the "secondary orality", as he calls it, brought about by electronic technology: taped or "talked" books (tapes for the blind are of course a different matter); telephones; radio; television. This new orality, he remarks, is "more deliberate and self-conscious." True, but why is it that specialist scholars, from whom we would expect discussion and exploration in depth and detail, try to cram everything into one book, inevitably skating over the surface? In order to "popularise"? The catch is, such books will be opened only by those who want something more searching than they offer.

One of Ong's popularising gestures I find totally

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[2] *Orality and Literacy: The Technologising of the Word*. By WALTER J. ONG. Methuen, £7.95, paper £3.50.

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enigmatic. There can be no doubt, he says, that Chinese characters will be replaced by the Roman alphabet "as soon as all the people in the Peoples' [*sic*] Republic of China master the same Chinese language ('dialect') . . . ." (Or are made to master it.) "The loss to literature will be enormous, but not so enormous as a Chinese typewriter using over 40,000 characters." What was that again?

However, there are two fine remarks to carry away. One has it that "It is bad pedagogy to insist that because there is nothing 'wrong' with other dialects, it makes no difference whether or not speakers of another dialect learn the grapholect [*established national written language*], which has resources of a totally different order of magnitude." (This process rarely involves the death of a thousand typewriters.)

The second occurs in a description of the "psychodynamics" of oral cultures: proverbial in style, "redundant" or "copious", "empathetic and participatory", aggregative rather than analytic. Since all depends on memory and you only know what you recall, he sums up: "Think memorable thoughts." That is a memorable thought, and chastening in its implications.

Ong appears to be in two minds, one oral and the other written. He is explicitly concerned to "undercut the chirographic and typographic bias", but he also concedes (if it is a concession) that "writing is consciousness-raising." It may be that what most—and rather touchingly—sways him is the consideration that God *speaks*, He does not write: "Jesus, the Word of God, left nothing in writing, though he could read and write." Ong follows with a gloss on 2 Corinthians 3:6: "The letter kills, the spirit [breath, on which rides the spoken word] gives life." Well, there is another book to be written around that passage.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION TODAY threatens or promises to take us a stage nearer the primitive.[3] Actually the book is several degrees more modest; or perhaps just less comprehensible to the lewd laity. One contributor proposes, as a "new assumption", that

> "Long and exclusive emphasis on the verbal mode in education may have the effect of diminishing an individual's ability to make cognitive shifts in information-processing mode as required for specific tasks."

Since he is talking about the teaching of realistic drawing, and since the proposal is hemmed about by qualifiers and particularisers, it may be reckoned to be harmless.

Topics dealt with here include facial expression and intonation (both of which, as we have long suspected, assist speech by completing meaning); finger-snapping; mother-child nonverbal interaction; animal communication; eye behaviour and blushing (it seems that women still tend to blush more than men, or did in 1977). Glendon Schubert's article on "Nonverbal Communication as Political Behaviour" looks like being exciting, but ends in mystery. It seems that something was done to or by some twenty Swiss judges in the course of a field-study in 1970, which elicited from them smiles, or scowls, or head-movements, or even getting up and walking around behind the bench. (Not one of them, we are told, actually slept.) The conclusions drawn from these observations are either absent from the text or (more likely) invisible to my untrained eye. Apart, that is, from this: "Nonverbal communication itself was best predicted by emotional communication, economically conservative attitudes, and Romand language maternalism"—in particular when the judges were relatively young and Roman Catholic.

Despite an effort by the editor to persuade us that the contributors are simply exploring the ever-popular question, "What makes people tick?", these are specialist papers, rich in tables, graphs and "dendrograms", varying between the labouredly obvious and the reconditely tentative. My impression, it has to be admitted, was that they were waiting for Walter J. Ong to come along and make them into a book.

IN A SIMILAR SPIRIT of hopefulness, the editor of *Slips of the Tongue* assures us that collecting speech errors is enjoyable and can justify such unscholarly pursuits as attending dinner-parties or watching television interviews.[4] But do not imagine it is a simple straightforward business. If you listen for errors you may miss the content of what is said; if you attend to the content you may miss the errors. Also, you have to watch out for deliberate witticisms, like "my excess (Access) card."

These papers analyse types of errors and divide them into linguistic categories. One care is for the implications that wrongness has for rightness, for "the correct operation of the language production process." Emphasis, that's to say, is less on the psychological significance of such "Freudian" slips as this: "In the case of the female genitals, in spite of many *Versuchungen* [temptations]—I beg your pardon, *Versuche* [experiments] . . . ", and more on the types of linguistic mishaps, such as simple transpositions ("the Milo de Venus", "I roasted a cook"); word-blends ("lection" for *lecture/lesson*); splices and spoonerisms (Spooner himself was not a typical spoonerist: he is said to have poured claret

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[3] *Nonverbal Communication Today: Current Research.* Edited by MARY RITCHIE KEY. Mouton Publishers, DM 105.

[4] *Slips of the Tongue and Language Production.* Edited by ANNE CUTLER. Mouton Publishers, DM 40.

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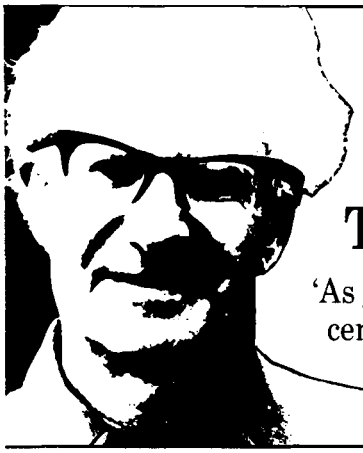

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on spilt salt); confusion between similar sounds or endings ("the coffee is copulating"); word-division ("rubbish sheep"); and so on.

A more complex error, in the "substitution-blend" category, occurs when the speaker started to say "severely retarded", then thought of "profoundly retarded", and ended with "When you're working with severely profound children. . . ." This is glossed with the heavy-handedness which generally sets in when scientific method is applied to the humanities:

> "We see that (part of) an adverb has substituted for an adjective. Note, however, that the adverb, *profoundly*, is composed morphologically of the adjective, *profound*, and the adverb-forming suffix *-ly*", etc.

Then there is the "crucial, and largely unexplored" question, "To what extent do children differ from adults in their storage and retrieval of lexical items?"—to which an answer is attempted by comparing adult and child malapropisms. An example taken has as its "target word", *condiment(s)*:

> "(1) Adult: We have a lovely Victorian *condom* set.
> (2) Child: Pass the *monuments*, please.
> (3) Child: Here you are, silly, you mean the *ornaments*."

It is noted that the adult preserves the initial consonant and the stressed vowel while the children preserve the number of syllables and the final consonant. It is also observed that children are unlikely to know the word *condom*, apparently one of the "classical malapropisms" collected from adults in 1978.

Ignorance is allowed as a factor in the commission of errors, notably in the field of medicine: "frosted" and "phosphate" for *prostate*; "muted" for *neutered*; "polaroids" for *haemorrhoids*; "fornications for *fomentations*; "tantalisers" for *tranquillisers*. In the field of food: "corvettes" for *courgettes*; "desecrated" coconut for *desiccated*; "partisan" for *Parmesan*; "armadillo" for *Amontillado*; "Salome" for *salami*. But it may be that some errors are the result of having a lot in one's head, as when Heine referred to the heroine of *Faust* as "Käthchen" instead of *Gretchen*. "They are two of the most prevalent feminine diminutives . . . and they are both names found in Goethe, and even belong to persons in his *life*." If you didn't know anything about Goethe you would never make that silly mistake.

"To err is human . . . " is cited by Ong as an example of the formulaic-mnemonic characteristic of oral cultures. Several times in the present book we hear of the deletion-of-consonant error, "tendahl" for *Stendahl*; the context is such that we cannot be absolutely sure that *Stendahl* is an error for *Stendhal*. The blurb on the back cover mentions "the slips of the tongue in a large corpus of spantaneous English conversation." The corpus does cover quite a span, so no wonder if the tongue slips on occasion.

GRAMMAR AND GOOD TASTE is rather more of a book for the "general reader": a brisk and nicely documented history of the American concern ("or mania") for correctness and the attendant suspicion ("or fear") of language regulation.[5] The conclusion, exposed on p. 6, is foregone: "The history of the failure of language reform in America should serve as a warning to those who would modify the language of its people."

So, little suspense here, no waiting for a thrilling denouement. But instead a lively sequence of vignettes from the early 18th century onwards, among them those figures who wanted to preserve the language of Hampden and Milton—and the others, seemingly few, who wished to replace English with Greek or French or Hebrew. The latter proposal led the *Quarterly Review* of London to opine that the Americans considered themselves the new "chosen people"; while rather more wittily a member of the committee which drafted the Declaration of Independence suggested that they should keep the language as it was and make *the English* speak Greek. More than anything else, it seems to have been the taboo word "English" that upset people, who therefore sought for substitutes or circumlocutions: "American", "the language of the United States", although a comforting theory had it that, before long, English or more exactly American-English would be the universal tongue and hence washed clean of original sin.

Encouraged by the Revolution, the great Noah Webster rejected British authority in linguistic matters in favour of national authority. "A *national language* is a band of *national unity*" (1789). He was at least as prescriptive as descriptive; usage is the law of speech, but "only when custom is national, when the practice of a nation is uniform or general." Nor was he sentimental about dialects, which in his view were disagreeable to strangers and could have "an unhappy effect upon the social affections." However, he failed in his attempt to redeem the word "bridegroom"—an amalgam of "bride" and "guma" ("man") corrupted by wrongful association with horses—as also in his efforts to reform spelling. Dennis E. Baron gives rather too much space to would-be reformers of spelling, an area where even the most intelligent of men soon begin to look like cranks. One of the reasons adduced by

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[5] *Grammar and Good Taste: Reforming the American Language*. By DENNIS E. BARON. Yale University Press, £15.50, $19.95.

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H. L. Mencken for the failure of these movements was that people associated "rationalised spelling" with comic dialect writing and couldn't take it seriously. In a sense different from Ong's, the public was too literate.

The concern that Americans have felt for their language is indicated by the distinguished figures listed here. Benjamin Franklin ("Art is long, and their Time is short", so pupils had better concentrate on their native language); Thomas Jefferson (a believer in "judicious neology"); Walt Whitman ("The Americans are going to be the most fluent and melodious voiced people in the world"); Ambrose Bierce (author of a guide to usage, *Write It Right*); Mark Twain (in the interests of spelling reform he reported a script-ural revolt in ancient Egypt: it took 45 minutes to render the Lord's Prayer in hieroglyphics and only four minutes to do it in Roman letters); Henry James (addressing Bryn Mawr College in 1905: "Against a care for tone, it would very much appear, the elements of life in this country, as at present conditioned, violently and increasingly militate"). . . . It is to the balance struck by opposing forces—the drive for correctness and the desire for independence and difference—that we owe the happy circumstance that, while American-English has its distinctiveness, Americans can understand British-English and Britons can understand American-English—and other races can understand both.

While Baron is not too well disposed towards "high-handed purism", he is fair-minded, even to quoting as representative of a "grass-roots attitude" what strikes me as a quite affecting passage from a recent undergraduate examination paper (Eastern Illinois University):

> "I think I support prescriptivism. . . . I believe there is one right and wrong for everyone. Perhaps what I think is right is not what you think is right but in the final analysis that isn't going to matter. What God thinks is right is what really matters and He doesn't have one right for you and one right for me."

One would not oneself, one hopes, try to proscribe "jeopardise" in favour of "jeopard" (etymologically a verb already: "game" + "part, divide"), as did a New York journalist in the 1860s; or prescribe the exclusive use of "paraphernalia" in its original legal sense (the personal property of a married woman beyond her dowry). Baron deprecates prescription, but a suspicion lurks that he would face without excessive repining the proscription of such contemporary "language guardians" and amateur "gatekeepers" (at least one of them lacking a college degree) as Jacques Barzun, Edwin Newman, John Simon, and William Safire.

YES, THESE BOOKS do "go together." They share, in

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varying degrees and some of them innocently, a treason of the clerks—a taste for primitivism and anarchy and what Pope called "Mountains of Casuistry", a curious turning against what has made them what they are. No doubt such a course is amusing and relatively safe—and helps to carve out one's niche or university chair in the ever-increasing edifice of Universal Darkness.

The Change in Fiction

Buford's People—By MALCOLM BRADBURY

IN THESE DARK TIMES of recession, nuclear proliferation and breakfast television, there is much reason for despair, little for cheer. But for those of us who are of a literary devotion there is a real pleasure to be had from that revival of serious fiction that—tentatively, perhaps, and insecurely, but undoubtedly—has begun to display itself over the last few years in Britain. It is marked by real evidence of the coming of a significant generation of new novelists and story-writers, some now quite well established, others still close to the beginnings of their careers; but also by changes in publishing, bookselling, and, unquestionably, bookbuying. In most councils, it is wisely being treated with some caution, for the difficulties of the literary book in Britain remain very considerable indeed. But there *are* interesting new writers, interesting new publishers, interesting new book-formats, and interested new readers; and it may well be that among the younger generation the habit of buying good and well-made fiction will give the market-place, that sad forum where so many things are decided, a quite new look.

Perhaps even more importantly, one may also point out that, beyond the hypes and the promotions, there is evidence of a spirited and enlarging transformation in the nature of the novel itself. Indeed one might risk the view that not since the early 1950s has the fictional scene in Britain looked so interesting, challenging, and even internationally significant. The late 1940s and early 1950s were perhaps the last time when the world of fiction called with a sense of excitement and change—though, of course, there have been notable moments since. It was then that, suddenly and almost simultaneously, the new talents of a post-War generation of British novelists began to declare themselves, attract attention, acquire some degree of collective character and devotion, and shift the general direction of the novel in Britain. The collectivity subsequently proved not to be as great as it looked, and the emphases of the time—on liberalism, on provincialism, on realism—came in the end to look narrow. But these writers did not leave the novel the same after their coming, and the best and most enduring of them now form a various, interesting, senior generation of fiction in Britain.

Despite the fact that there were very important talents emerging during the 1960s, when remarkable books like *The Golden Notebook* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* opened up a new promise of experiment, that 1950s excitement did not last as long as it might. After *Look Back In Anger* in 1956, it soon appeared that the more exciting writing talents were being drawn toward the theatre, and then to television drama; and it was post-War British theatre and not post-War British fiction that now most impressed in the larger eyes of the world.

British fiction in general began to acquire the reputation of being in a traditionalist, provincial backwater, and the alert and curious reader was more likely to turn toward France or America for serious, questioning, and consciously contemporary fiction. By the early 1970s the mood was changing, and some of the best of the older writers had themselves strikingly shifted in direction. A new interest in fantasy and fairy story, gothic and grotesquerie, made its mark; and a sceptical questioning of the realism which has marked so much post-War fiction, a disquiet with simple ideas of mimesis, affected perception of the nature and role of fiction in society. Writers like Angela Carter and Beryl Bainbridge represented a marked altering of the atmosphere; and the 1970s have been a period of shifts and redirections confusing to the systemisers, but innovative in general effect.

None the less a certain gloom persisted, and the suspicion remained that the British novel was in a sharp decline, both commercially and aesthetically. A gloomy survey in a late issue of Ian Hamilton's *The New Review* displayed this view among the novelists themselves; a little later Bill Buford's magazine *Granta* devoted its third issue to "The End of the English Novel." These rumours of mortality now look premature, but it has not always been easy to take the positive view during the last ten years. Publishers were defecting from serious fiction, and a good many of the more successful writers were clustering in the safe middle of the market, writing genre fiction or Hampstead provincialism. Recognition of quality seemed hard to

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find in a literary scene often curiously grudging to and neglectful of its best talents; a season of Punk reviewing flourished to advance not critical judgment but a sullen narcissism, a tone still too apparent in much British reviewing.

Not surprisingly, the best writers often sought their recognition and reaction elsewhere, most obviously in the United States. It was part of the same syndrome that British readers were directed to, and selected from, the safe middle of the market, especially from those mainstream writers who became well-known names successful for being successful. The book trade itself was reshaping, and clever editors were beginning to devise new types of book-resembling object that sold for reasons little to do with their contents. Declining library purchases and bookshop stock reduction added to the harm, and some publishers began trimming their fiction lists down to disappearing point.

MEANWHILE, THE CRITICS wrote their modern books on different matters: the French *nouveau roman*, the American novel. To critics, criticism is important and it ought to be to writers too; but in Britain the alliance has never been easy to forge. Meanwhile the mysterious operations of the market generated larger mysteries and metaphysics, for during the 1970s it changed considerably. In the age of the hype and the sponsored jog, new methods of presentation were clearly in order, and the 1970s became the age of the literary prize. One of the more remarkable of recent literary plots has been the success of the Booker-McConnell Prize in establishing, selling and, on occasion, embarrassing its winning authors. Though it was intended as a prize for serious fiction, and has often gone to it, it took time to establish its character and status. But it has, for all its complexities, done much to encourage publishers and readers towards good fiction and serious young writers, and we ought to be grateful for that.

More recent promotions, like the "Best of British" promotions of the Book Marketing Council, have had similar effects. They have created their share of envy, and a sense of injustice and arbitrariness, as prizes and promotions always do; but they have also advanced the cause of good fiction, and helped promote a sense of the change and energy that has come into the novel.

Whatever the causes—whether it be recession in theatre and television drama, a new commercial cunning in the publishing houses and the bookshops, or a shift in the audience—the novel in Britain is indeed showing signs of being an exciting, and indeed an experimental, form again. The form is attracting to it a significant number of writers of new talent, and creating a new mood hard to define but clear to see. No more than in the '50s are these new writers a clear tendency or movement; and even less than then, when the reviewers and critics did seek to tie the rising group together, is it possible to see them as such. In any case there is much overlapping of generations, and little of that sense of new start that is likely to shape a post-War mood. But there are certain striking features which mark the scale of the shift away from the novel of the 1950s, when the idea of the novel as a liberal realist form was much canvassed, and there was a deliberate attempt to discard the heritage of recent Modernism and go back beyond and behind it to the tradition, seen either eclectically or in its narrowed form as Leavis's "Great Tradition", that exacting line of social and moral fiction that somehow seemed the great guiding achievement.

FOR TODAY'S NOVELISTS, these are rarely the guiding principles and markers. For some, like A. N. Wilson, that heritage is a real presence, but one that is also kept at a distance. For others, the mood of a "reaction against experiment" which was part of that attempt at recovery has been displaced. Part of that temper in the 1950s was a devout refusal, amongst some writers, to be interested in contemporary experiment in other countries. Though this rejection has been much over-emphasised, it was there in the strong attempt at the recovery of a "provincial" middle ground which gave some of the momentum of the 1950s novel.

The sense of aesthetic environment and significant tradition in the young contemporary writers seems quite different. The larger map of contemporary fiction is making its mark on writers who are quite as likely to acknowledge the influence of a Márquez, a Kundera or a Calvino as they are that of a George Eliot or a Lawrence. The socio-moral tradition depends on a certain consensus about human nature and the relation between private and public existence, on standards of virtue and merit which may be freely shared between persuasive writer and listening reader. It is no longer easy to establish such a consensus. The fantastic and the grotesque, the consciously fictional and speculative, the highly mannered and formalised aspects of the novel are more massively in play again. And many of the new writers display the cosmopolitanism of a highly variegated culture; indeed a good number of them—Salman Rushdie, Kazuo Ishiguro, Timothy Mo, for example—are bi-ethnic in origin and literary influence.

THE PROBLEM ABOUT literary change and development is that it needs an environment, an intellectual support system, a critical forum in which it might evolve and come to a degree of self-understanding, and this is what the British have never

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been good at. None the less nearly every movement or tendency in Britain in the 20th century has managed to find a focus or forum in the place we normally turn to for such things, which is the literary or the little magazines.

For the emerging Modernists before the First World War, it was determined reviews like Ford Madox Hueffer's *English Review*, John Middleton Murry's *Rhythm* and then, under Ezra Pound's masterminding, the literary section of *The Egoist* that performed the essential tasks, printing important new writers along with critical responses and, from time to time, urgent manifestos. By the 1920s, much of this task had passed to two more sober ventures, Eliot's *Criterion* and Murry's *Adelphi*; the 1930s, much more a decade of new movements than we now remember, had *New Writing* and *New Verse* as rallying points. When, in the 1940s, a changeover mood displayed itself—and it came, as Cyril Connolly put it, to be closing time in the gardens of the West—Connolly's own *Horizon* and John Lehmann's *Penguin New Writing* sustained the adventure and the debate. Both lapsed just around the time when a new literary generation was establishing itself in the early 1950s, but *Encounter* and *The London Magazine*, both excellently and happily still with us, carried the new mood. For the 1960s and early 1970s Ian Hamilton's *The New Review* had a fundamental role, until its unfortunate demise.

Now, all of these were in their different ways idiosyncratic magazines, often representing tendencies or readings of cultural direction that, in today's retrospect, seem of far less importance than the specific editorial shrewdness and decisiveness that led them toward major discoveries of talent; it is the writers they printed first or promoted most warmly that we remember them for. A good editor is, in the end, a major reader of signals, a supporter of talents, a reception-point of much useful critical information.

In a famous statement, "The Idea of a Literary Review", contributed to *The Criterion* in 1926, T. S. Eliot reflected on this side of the editorial task and the difficulties it posed. A magazine is not a compendium. It can be too comprehensive, or too narrow. It can be too profligate in taking the best of whatever comes, or too specifically literary:

> "The review which makes up its contents merely with what the editor considers 'good stuff' will obviously have the character of a miscellany, and no other character whatsoever. A review which depends on its editor's vague perceptions of 'good' and 'bad' has manifestly no critical value. A review should be an organ of documentation. That is to say, the bound volumes of a decade should represent the development of the keenest sensibility and the clearest thought of ten years."

This sets the standards high, and they are notoriously hard to meet. We have our new magazines now, often sponsored by Arts Council or Regional Arts Association support, but it would be difficult, in fact, to catch from most of them a prevailing spirit, mood, or set of critical or aesthetic issues that preoccupy us in the arts. We have other important ventures from book publishers themselves: Faber's *Introduction*, Penguin's *Firebird*.

A MAGAZINE THAT FOLLOWED something like Eliot's prescription, however, would go further than most of these. It would have a peculiar idiosyncrasy and probably a degree of inconsistency, such as marked Connolly's *Horizon*, which blew with several critical winds. In the absence of a good literary critical debate in this country, it would probably not have a strong theorem of literature, though it should certainly have a curiosity about new literary theory in a time when internationally it is curiously abundant. Above all, it would find new talent, try to foster aesthetic and social argument, and have a sense of cultural urgency. And, if I am right in suggesting that there has been a climatic change in the spirit of fiction latterly, and that this is a point of peculiar importance now, it would certainly try to reach out for, encourage, and represent it. It would be a place which the aesthetically curious and the literarily inquisitive would start to turn to, as a matter of course, hoping to make good new creative acquaintances. It would disquiet and annoy; it would, if it was any good, escape provincialism or even nationalism, and sustain an international perspective.

IF ONE WERE LOOKING, as writer or reader, for such a magazine, then it would be hard at this minute to avoid the claims of *Granta*, the once locally-oriented, Cambridge-based magazine that somehow passed in 1979 into the hands of an American graduate student, Bill Buford, who with Peter de Bolla set out immediately to transform it. A vested interest may be spotted here; I am on its editorial board, though what that essentially means is alerting the better and more risk-taking writers I know to its presence. It is very much Buford's magazine, and has arisen from his energy and capacity not only to give it a new literary and intellectual life but a new economic stamina. Its seven issues so far, all determined and thematic, have reflected his view and vision of the creative scene in this country, and, in a significant and valuable way, outside it.

Buford made his first issue, in Spring 1979, a substantial and invaluable round-up of the new American writing, and especially that experimental part of it that had by then come to be called Post-Modernist. There was good fiction by William

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Siegfried Sassoon Diaries 1915-1918
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Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart
ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN

'A full-scale life, founded on primary sources, many of them previously unpublished . . . very well written, affectionate without idolatry, well-proportioned and full of entertaining detail.' *London Review of Books*
Faber Paperback £5.95

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Gass, from his long-awaited new novel, by Donald Barthelme, John Hawkes and others; and good critical discussion of Gass and Walter Abish and Leonard Michaels, two outstanding figures Buford went on to print later. Since then the magazine has more deeply entered the British scene, not without some idiosyncracy and shifts of commitment. Thus issue number 3 expressed a familiar gloom; it was entitled *The End of the English Novel*, and a dark editorial proposed that there was a conspiracy of timidity in British fiction, where a declining nexus of writers, publishers, booksellers and readers managed to generate ever duller and duller books. It saw the crisis as lying particularly in publishing, and offered to do something about it; the fact that the issue then went on to print Salman Rushdie, Angela Carter and Russell Hoban offered sound evidence that there was a newer kind of writer who could generate the necessary excitements.

The fascination with the publishing crisis, in Britain and elsewhere, continued in issue 4, which displayed itself in a striking new and opulent format. It also showed Buford's ever-improving capacity to lure or discover the better young writers to his pages, printing Abish, Raymond Carver, and Martin Amis. Issue 5 had Hoban, Lisa St Aubin de Terán, and the Mexican satirist Jorge Ibarguengoitia, as well as a section from Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth*, betokening an increased political commitment. These writers were not only superbly presented and sat well together, suggesting a spirit of international change in fiction in which British writers had a significant role; they also prefigured books to come which, in the event, have proved to be some of the prize-winners of the last few years.

LATTERLY THE TONE has changed again. Issue number 6 was called *A Literature for Politics*, and marked a sharp shift away from the stress on fictionality and experimental Post-Modernism that had largely guided the magazine to date.[1] The editorial explained that it was "organized to fill a gap, a felt emptiness in current literary achievement", and it suggested that much of what had for twenty-five years been regarded as avant-garde (and which the magazine had supported) was "noteworthy only for its insignificance."

Calls for literary commitment have been growing in the ever-more-disturbing political climate, and there has been evidence of a tiring of the Post-Modernist impulse; Buford evidently sought to reflect that. In calling for a literature of political significance, he had the grace not to suggest that its best expression would come in the form of a new polemicism or a new realism. But, putting together his issue "from the observation that we are living in a world that we are on the verge of destroying", he devoted one substantial part of it to documentary materials on Argentina and the Falklands crisis, much of it critical of the British reaction, and another significant part to the Middle Eastern crisis and the recent conduct of Israel, a matter for yet larger despair. Milan Kundera, Uwe Johnson and Nadine Gordimer contribute notable pieces, and Kundera's extraordinary and creative appreciation of the role of laughter in a world of sharpening darkness is perhaps the best distillation in an interesting issue of the complex response writers and writing can offer to the world as it is.

BUFORD'S MOST RECENT ISSUE[2] marks another change, this time in the context of the magazine. Penguin and *Granta* have now gone into collaboration (though support from the Eastern Arts Association continues). The magazine's exciting book-like format and its excellent presentation remain; the issue is timed to coincide with the "Best of Young British Novelists" promotion, many of the writers involved having been *Granta* authors before we knew that the best of young British was what they were. And here are all the twenty, in firm alphabetical order, from Martin Amis, with the first chapter of a new novel from the Genital Herpes school of fiction, to A. N. Wilson's decidedly more delicate story "Scandal", about a boy returning to a public school after his father has been in public disgrace. It is not always the best-known authors who contribute the best pieces; Rose Tremain's story "My Wife is a White Russian", Graham Swift's fascinating narrative fragment "About the Eel", and William Boyd's teasing story "Extract from the Journal of Flying Officer J" are particularly pleasurable. The talents vary, and some are clearly of a particular intensity: the passive clarity of Lisa St Aubin de Terán, in her fragment from *Slow Train to Milan*, a book the exactitude of which was not seen by all its critics, or the Kafkaesque grotesquerie of Clive Sinclair, hyper-variation on an already perverse theme, are displays of forceful and distinctive imaginations.

Read as a whole, the volume covers a considerable range, from the semi-realistic to the fantastic, the quasi-documentary to—as in Maggie Gee's fragment—the hyper-experimental. The volume is reticent of a preface, but it does justify that interlocking of experimental aesthetic curiosity and political anxiety which has been increasingly the editorial spirit. Ian McEwan explicitly raises the political question in discussing his new oratorio and expressing his now much changed commitments

[1] Numbers 1–2 are out of print. Nos 3–4, £2.50; No. 5, £2.95; No. 6, £3.50 (including packing and postage) are available from *Granta*, The Hobson Gallery, 44A Hobson Street, Cambridge, CB1 1NL.

[2] *Granta No. 7—Best of Young British Novelists.* Penguin, £3.50.

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toward a feminine if not feminist sensibility. At another level, the same issue is explored with cunning fictional delicacy in Kazuo Ishiguro's story "Summer after the War", set in Japan in a post-War moment when the disquiet about his country's past martial history begin to produce a sense of contradiction in a child's experience.

It is not the most explicit of these stories that work best, but those which are (as many are) clearly fascinated by story and the high formal condensations that are possible in it—one reason, indeed, why the short story and the novella are taking on a fresh force in Britain. Frequently the subject matter is grotesque and disturbing, and a troubled, wasting eroticism runs through many of the pieces; but it is less the scabrousness of a Martin Amis than the finesse of some of his yet younger rivals that shows the promise on offer. We may dispute whether the Best really are the best, but they command our attention consistently through the issue: a justification of them, certainly, but also of Bill Buford and his editorial achievement.

Modern Metamorphoses

From Ovid to Ezra Pound—By BERNARD BERGONZI

IN 1982 CHARLES TOMLINSON delivered the Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge; they are now published as *Poetry and Metamorphosis.*[1] The "Prologue" to the book sets out their genesis and aim:

> "Re-reading Ovid while editing *The Oxford Book of Verse in English Translation*, I found that the thought of metamorphosis and, indeed, of translation itself as being at once an act of metamorphosis and one of renewed creation entered even more compellingly into one's mind. Metamorphosis, re-creation, translation—these and their meaning for poetry will be the theme of my four letters."

Metamorphosis is a large idea but Tomlinson keeps it focused by frequent quotation from particular poems, beginning in the first lecture with Dryden's splendid versions of some of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. They appeared in a collective translation launched by Dryden towards the end of his life, in collaboration with the publisher Jacob Tonson, and completed after his death by other and younger translators.

Tomlinson is an acute close reader, with the gift, essential to a first-class critic though often unremarked, of finding the right passages to quote. In the first lecture he throws several balls into the air and adroitly keeps them there. He shows how brilliantly Dryden translated Ovid; and introduces Ovid as a major influence on literary modernism, who deeply affected Eliot and Pound and, less obviously, Joyce—reminding us of the line from the *Metamorphoses* about Daedalus, "And he abandoned his mind to obscure arts", that provides the epigraph to *Portrait of the Artist* and looks ahead to Joyce's later exercises, Molly Bloom asking Leopold what "metempsychosis" means, and the two washerwomen turning into a stone and an elm in *Finnegans Wake*. Tomlinson describes Dryden as "the Poundian figure of his age", a master-translator himself and encouraging younger poets in the same activity.

The argument unfolds rapidly, touching on the major human preoccupations raised by the Ovidian metamorphosis, particularly our fear of becoming an object, which is another name for death. Even so, discriminations can be made: "Given the option between tree and stone I suppose you and I would choose to become trees, would we not?" Tomlinson urbanely enquires, and goes on to bring in illustrations from Wordsworth and Rilke.

Subsequent lectures show the different ways in which Eliot and Pound understand the idea of metamorphosis. In *The Waste Land* Eliot takes from Ovid the cruel story of Tereus and the tongueless Philomela (which appealed to his feelings about silence and the difficulty of utterance), and the sexually ambiguous Tiresias. Tomlinson sees Eliot's interest in metamorphosis as being bound up with his sense of the provisional nature of personality, and even, perhaps, of human identity itself ("I should have been a pair of ragged claws . . ."). Pound, on the other hand, sees in Ovidian terms the essential unity of nature, sensing a relation between all forms of life that underlies the constant changes in things.

This vision is projected on a huge scale in Pound's supremely metamorphic *Cantos*. Yet there are moments of convergence between these poets:

> "Dryden, Eliot and Pound stand together in so far as all of them (Dryden in his translation of the

[1] *Poetry and Metamorphosis.* By CHARLES TOMLINSON. Cambridge University Press, £9.95.

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philosophic core of Ovid's fifteenth book, Eliot in *Little Gidding*, Pound in Canto LXXXI) achieve a peak in their careers by an act of literary metempsychosis, by allowing themselves, each in his own way, to be spoken through by the dead."

In the fourth lecture Tomlinson looks at examples of poetic translation as a form of creative metamorphosis, returning to Dryden—he describes Dryden's version of Book I of *The Iliad* as "one of the great might-have-beens of literature"—and ending in the early 20th century, with Vorticism as a brief moment of cultural metamorphosis, and Pound's *Cathay* of 1915 as a major poetic transformation of a remote original.

Poetry and Metamorphosis is a model of what I think literary criticism ought to be and seldom is, in our era of academic over-production and premature publication. That is to say, it is economic—aphoristic even—but continually and lucidly suggestive; it assumes that rational discussion of literature is possible; it is concerned with poetry rather than something else and more interested in the object of criticism than in displaying the critic's brilliance. It may be worth adding that it is the work of a man of mature years and reflective disposition, who is well read in several literatures, and who is himself a fine poet and a distinguished translator of poetry.

TOMLINSON REMARKS in passing on the blindness and misdirection of the will that led Pound to support Mussolini and the Fascist cause. Such political error provides the central theme of Cairns Craig's *Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Politics of Poetry*.[2] He looks back 50 years to 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany and democratic convictions seemed to be in retreat everywhere, among the intellectuals as well as among the masses. In that same fateful year Pound had his first and last interview with his hero Mussolini and proclaimed that the spirit of the American Founding Fathers was reborn in Fascist Italy; Yeats met General O'Duffy and wrote that "a Fascist opposition is forming behind the scenes to be ready should some tragic situation develop"; while Eliot told an audience at the University of Virginia that "reasons of race and culture combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable" and that "a spirit of excessive tolerance is to be deprecated."

Craig acknowledges that this seeming correspondence in extremity was more apparent than real and in any case short-lived. Yeats soon abandoned O'Duffy's farcical movement, and Eliot came to regret the Virginia lectures collected as *After Strange Gods* and would not allow them to be reprinted. Yeats's politics were too caught up with his personal mythology and Eliot's too oblique and evasively presented to achieve much public reality. Eliot was not impressed with Italian Fascism and found more value in Charles Maurras's royalism, unreal though this might seem in a British context. By the Second World War he had dwindled into a democratic Conservative. Only Pound became and remained a convinced Fascist, supporting the Axis cause throughout World War II and continuing unrepentantly to honour it during the post-War years. Nevertheless, at a certain point in history Yeats, Eliot and Pound were thinking in broadly similar ways, that were anti-democratic, hierarchical and authoritarian.

Why this should have been so is the subject of Cairns Craig's thoughtful book. It has many virtues: it is tough-minded and coherently argued, making propositions that can be agreed or disagreed with, and taking careful account of evidence without jumping to conclusions too rapidly. Above all, it avoids the use of "Fascist" as a simple term of abuse; when Craig comes to discuss Fascism he puts it in its historical context and takes it seriously as a widely appealing political phenomenon between the Wars.

Craig presents a fairly subtle argument about the place of memory in modernist poetry. In order to understand it, he says, we must abandon the Coleridgian assumption that imagination is all-important and that memory is mere association, to be aligned with "fancy" as an inferior faculty. Craig argues that the empiricist, associationist aesthetics of the 18th century, which made much of memory, were very important for Yeats, Eliot and Pound, and is quite persuasive on the point. In fact, he might have acknowledged that memory was honoured long before the 18th century: in antiquity Mnemosyne was regarded as the mother of the muses.

The modernist poets, says Craig, had a strong sense of the past and made poetry out of moments of remembered experience; yet memory had to transcend the merely individual, and become part of history, or at least the intensely mythicised history that they pursued. Fascism, too, valued the past, looking back to remote ideal periods in the history of a nation or race; at the same time it was dynamic, transforming, with its eyes on a brilliant future, concerned—in Pound's phrase—to "Make It New." Craig sees this Janus aspect as characteristic of the major modernist poets, who were at the same time reactionary and revolutionary, committed both to tradition and modernity. What, ultimately, he presents is a homology between political and aesthetic attitudes, and as a speculative instrument it opens up interesting possibilities, though

[2] *Yeats, Eliot, Pound and the Politics of Poetry*. By CAIRNS CRAIG. Croom Helm, £11.95.

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the gap between ideology and what happens in particular poems remains wide.

At the same time, he offers excellent analyses of poems by Yeats, Pound and Eliot. I was particularly impressed with his reading of "Gerontion" as a poem in which all coherent relation with the past is lost and memory is reduced to a cloud of disconnected floating impressions; he makes better sense of this difficult poem than most critics I have read, and goes on to suggest how what was lost in "Gerontion" is recovered in *Four Quartets*. Despite the gaps in his argument and the reductionism that comes from trying to see three very different poets in similar terms, Craig has provided what seems to me the most intelligent discussion yet of the politics of literary modernism. At the end, though, he leaves unanswered the questions which at the beginning of his book he says need to be answered: just how seriously should we take, how should we read, poetry inspired by attitudes which we find repugnant?

PAUL SMITH, in his short study of Pound from the same publisher,[3] is also concerned with Pound's politics. The book is lively but superficial, and before long it will be a period piece, a memento of the already fading intellectual fashions of the late 1970s. Pound is inserted into a framework constructed of post-structuralist, psychoanalytical, Marxist and feminist components, casually scanned in the light of Derrida and Lacan and found wanting on many counts. To complete the process, he is unfavourably compared with three writers with whom he had personal and literary connections: Joyce, H.D., and Louis Zukofsky.

Smith begins his generally perverse account of Pound by recalling—though without actually mentioning them—certain French neo-Marxist approaches to Mallarmé that praise him for his "pure" textuality, an implicit form of historical materialism that eschews the idealist pursuit of a meaning beyond the words. He praises Swinburne for doing something similar in English, staying with words and not making the illusory move to things, and then applauds the very early Pound for his Swinburnean word-play. But before long Pound progressed to imagism, to writing about the visible world, and firm, clear utterance. He shifted, in short, from "reflexiveness" to "reflectiveness." All this suggests, according to Paul Smith, that he was already moving towards Fascism, not primarily be-

[3] *Pound Revised*. By PAUL SMITH. Croom Helm, £14.95.

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cause of what he *said* in his poems, but because of the authoritarian way he shaped his discourse.

Similarly, the lamentable War-time broadcasts from Rome Radio are the inevitable result, in Derridean terms, of Pound's "phonocentrism", his insistence on meaning and saying one thing at a time, using that dictatorial instrument, the human voice. Against all this is set Joyce's exploitation of polyvalent writing and the free play of signifiers in *Finnegans Wake*. There are the possibilities of serious critical discussion here, but they are mostly stifled by Lacanian gobbledygook.

THE FORMÈD TRACE, by an Italian scholar, Massimo Bacigalupo,[4] provides what is in every sense a more substantial study of Pound, concentrating on his writings from 1945 onwards. The oddest thing about the book is the claim on the jacket by Donald Davie that Bacigalupo is applying Derridean methods to the *Cantos*. Not so: there is no trace of Deconstruction here, for this is a work of solid, traditional *explication de texte* in the Continental manner, where the learned author has read everything that Pound has read and, in general, read it more accurately. It is a book to consult rather than to read; Bacigalupo is capable of interesting critical observations but he only rarely lifts his nose from the text to make them. What he really thinks of the *Cantos* is never apparent: in his preface he quotes with agreement R. P. Blackmur's judgment of 1934 that Pound is "neither a great poet nor a great thinker", though he does believe that Pound is a "rich and rewarding poet", so his laborious commentary is conducted in whatever territory exists between greatness and richness.

Charles Tomlinson refers in his lectures to Pound's self-identification with Odysseus in the *Pisan Cantos* and to "the doubtful homecoming of the later and mostly inferior cantos, *Rock-Drill* and *Thrones*." There is nothing in Bacigalupo's extended discussion of the late *Cantos* to make me resist Tomlinson's judgment. This large book seems to be a product of the academic Pound industry rather than of strong personal feelings about Pound. The author is, however, very sharp about Pound's persisting Fascist sentiments, and he regrets the continuing non-availability of the two cantos preceding the Pisan sequence, which were written in Italian and published in Italy towards the end of the Second World War, and were by all accounts strongly Fascist in attitude. I remarked on their suppression in a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1976; it is high time they were made available, whatever their content.

POUND APPEARS AT his most attractive in *Pound/Ford*, a volume of his correspondence with Ford Madox Ford, interspersed with the articles and reviews they wrote about each other's work.[5] It shows Pound's loyalty to his friends, his generosity to other writers, and his disinterested if sometimes aggressive passion for literature. Ford was—in a minor way—a poet, and in 1914 Pound described his "On Heaven" as "the best poem yet written in the 'twentieth-century fashion' " (but a few weeks later he read Eliot's "Prufrock" in manuscript and had to acknowledge that as the real embodiment of the new poetry). There is very little by Pound about Ford's masterpieces in fiction, *The Good Soldier* and *Parade's End*. In 1920 Ford ruefully observed that Pound didn't like prose at all, and in 1933 Pound acknowledged "I never did like NOVELS just as such." Ford for his part read the *Cantos* as examples of Flaubertian method, and in an article on Pound in 1931 described the early *Cantos* as "a *Bouvard et Pécuchet* of the North Mediterranean littoral", which provides an unexpected view of them.

Ford and Pound remained on good terms for 30 years, until Ford's death in 1939, though Ford was opposed to Pound's politics and was sometimes irritated by the crudely demotic idiom of his correspondence; in 1938 he complained, "Your 1892 O. Henry stuff is wearisomely incomprehensible by now." They did what they could to help each other in the 1930s, when both were hard up (Pound lent Ford small sums of money when publishers were slow to pay royalties, and when Ford was in America he went to great lengths to set up a teaching job for Pound that the latter made very plain he didn't want). Pound continued to revere Ford's memory in later years, partly, perhaps, as an embodiment of that ideal English way of life that he had once admired and then bitterly rejected.

Finally, one welcomes a paperback reprint of Pound's *Letters 1907-1941*.[6] A new and enlarged edition is overdue, but until that appears it is good to have the 1950 text available again.

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[4] *The Formèd Trace: The Later Poetry of Ezra Pound.* By MASSIMO BACIGALUPO. Columbia University Press, $50.50, £33.50.

[5] *Pound/Ford: The Story of a Literary Friendship.* Edited by BRITA LINDBERG-SEYERSTED. Faber, £20.00.

[6] *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941.* Edited by D. D. PAIGE. Faber, £4.95.

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Shards & Blurred Hieroglyphs

Seventeenth-Century Studies—By LAURENCE LERNER

HOW MUCH CAN WE really know about our 17th-century ancestors? The confidence of the positivist historians, setting out to tell us what really happened, or of the literary scholars, setting out to give us the contemporary meaning of a text, has taken a few blows lately; yet the flow of interpretations of the past shows no sign of diminishing. It is not even easy to be sure if it is now done with greater care, greater scepticism, or just more cagily.

Suppose we open *Poetic Traditions of the English Renaissance*,[1] a collection of learned essays in honour of L. L. Martz. Such a *Festschrift* belongs to a well-established academic genre: it will be bought by university libraries, and perhaps by a few of Professor Martz's friends. Among the interpretations of Spenser, Donne, Milton, and others—some of them helpful, some sadly turgid—is a sizzling piece by Thomas M. Greene called "Anti-hermeneutics", which attacks Stephen Booth, the learned editor of Shakespeare's Sonnets, for smoothing over the perplexities of the past, and concealing, by his too helpful editorial labours, the remoteness of a text that "comes to us as a shard." This is the sort of argument that now rocks the academies, so let us take a careful look at Greene's post-structuralist scepticism.

The text in question is Shakespeare's 129th sonnet, one of his best known. It will be best to have it in front of us:

Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action, and till action lust
Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight,
Past reason hunted, and no sooner had,
Past reason hated as a swallowed bait,
On purpose laid to make the taker mad;
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so,
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme,
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe,
Before, a joy proposed, behind, a dream.
All this the world well knows, yet none knows well
To shun the heav'n that leads men to this hell.

Does that seem to you remote and almost inaccessible, a "blurred hieroglyph" that we can only love if we begin "by misunderstanding and continue to understand gropingly"? Much hinges on your answer: for though Greene thinks this is the correct attitude to a poem of the past, he fears that the remoteness has in this case been concealed from you. The text you have just read is not the text printed in 1609: indeed, the text any of us reads anything of Shakespeare's in is hardly ever what was printed in his lifetime. Editors exist to smooth our path, and Stephen Booth has obligingly set down the principles by which he does this: "to provide a text that will give the modern reader as much as I can resurrect of a Renaissance reader's experience of the 1609 Quarto. . . . Both my text and my commentary are determined by what I think a Renaissance reader would have thought as he moved from line to line."

Such a principle is exactly what Roland Barthes attacked in his famous controversy with Picard: the idea that meaning is determinate, and can be supplied to us by scholars. For where does this "experience" of the 1609 reader now reside? If Booth is to use it as a touchstone for his text, says the new scepticism, he must have access to it independently of the text he is establishing. "Don't we ultimately want", asks Greene, "or shouldn't we want, the actual mysterious artefact history has handed down to us with all its built-in puzzlements and uncertainties?"

By this time you must be agog to know what Booth has done to the text of 1609, and the answer may turn out to be disappointingly mild: he has modernised the punctuation (there was, for instance, only a comma after "dream" and not a full stop: does that suggest a close link between the third quatrain and the final couplet?), and he has, along with most editors, made two emendations. Line 9 in the Quarto begins "made", not "mad"; and line 11 runs "A bliss in proof and provd and very wo." Booth's text, the indictment runs, "smooths over almost all the superficial perplexities in this poem of anguish and despair, this terrible sonnet." And Greene then goes on to develop his own view of how we read a past text: a view that compromises between the unwarranted certainty of the scholar who knows what the reading experience of 1609 was, and the "endless innocent game of free associations" recommended (though not,

[1] *Poetic Traditions of the English Renaissance*. Edited by MAYNARD MACK and GEORGE DEFOREST LORD. Yale University Press, £14.00, $17.95.

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he claims, practised) by the ludic Derrida.

Greene's theory of how meaning changes is illustrated from the word "spirit" in the first line of the poem. At least seven glosses have been proposed: "physical vigour", "mental energy", "spiritual essence", "life force", "bodily flow", "penis erectus", and "the subtle vapour needed for generation." But whereas we experience "a supersaturated plethora of competing meanings", the 17th-century reader, living before dictionaries, did not see these as distinct: "he probably read the word 'spirit' as a multi-faceted unity we can only try to imagine." An attractive suggestion, though Greene offers no evidence to support it; and as I reflect on his terms I find it harder and harder to be sure that there is a real difference between supersaturated plethora and multi-faceted unity (or, later, "veined monolith"). I am sure the Elizabethans were able to say that one word has several meanings (how else could they have had their taste for puns?); and we have no difficulty, surely, in thinking about multi-faceted unity.

IS IT ALL A STORM in a tea-cup? Should scholars have better things to do than such irresponsible nit-picking? Well, the textual details are not necessarily nit-picking. I am glad to learn that Shakespeare may have written "A bliss in proof and provd and very wo": the line makes sense, and I find it deeply moving. The usual version is moving too, and produces a better-balanced pentameter, but I am attracted by the thought of Shakespeare having written "A bliss in proof and provd", and then adding, as a plangent extra, "and very woe". Though of course I could have found this out from Booth's edition.

But the theoretical scepticism advanced by Greene (and Barthes, and his followers) does seem to me to have a fair element of nit-picking. In the first place, is he against all editing? We know that the standard of accuracy among Elizabethan printers was very low: are we to preserve every minim error, or every grain of dirt on a picture, because it is part of "the actual mysterious artefact history has handed down to us"? Sometimes "history" has given us more than one version. The first line of Othello in the Quartos is "Tush, never tell me, I take it much unkindly"; the Folio omits "tush." The difference may not be important, but someone has to decide whether to put it in.

And in the second place, how much real disagreement underlies the theoretical fuss? It's true you can't appeal to the evidence about the past as if it was a judge; but it's equally true that you can't study the past unless you have some concept of evidence. Greene quotes H.-G. Gadamer's view that "the true historical object is . . . the unity of the one (the object) and the other (true historical thinking taking account of its own historicality)", and rejects it in favour of a view that "would accept estrangement as given and then search out patiently some bridge." I cannot see much difference between these views, or any reason why Stephen Booth—or L. L. Martz, innocent begetter of this argument—should not see himself as such a patient builder of bridges.

A RATHER OLDER controversy, but one which can easily be translated into contemporary terms, is activated by Jack Bennett's *Poetry of the Passion*.[2] This very learned book traces the treatment of Christ's passion over twelve centuries of English verse, and its method throughout is that of literary history. Poems are returned to the tradition they belong in, and all the emphasis is on continuity.

A generation ago, Rosamund Tuve demonstrated that what seemed most daring and "metaphysical" in the poetry of George Herbert was already present in medieval poetry; now Professor Bennett has extended this demonstration to most other poets as well. Of Lancelot Andrewes' sermons we are told "his conceits, his paradoxes, his emphases are thoroughly medieval"; the conceits in Donne's poem on the Cross "might appear far-fetched conceits if we did not know that they had all been neatly packed together, and illustrated, in the *De Cruce* of the learned Lipsius, who duly traces them back to the Fathers." At one point, Bennett makes it clear that for him this is the right way to read poetry: "the whole [of Donne's sonnet "What if this present"] gains from being read in the light of medieval antecedents."

This is a perfectly tenable theory of poetic meaning: we can call it philological or (in more modern parlance) intertextual. It is the view that a poem is a response to previous poetry, and must be returned to a poetic context in order to be fully responded to. It is quite different from the view that a poem's essential origin is in the poet's experience. Of "The Dream of the Rood", most famous of Old English poems—Bennett does not care for this traditional title—he says "every line of the poem is taut with the intensity of personal feeling and experience"; of Herrick's "Good Friday", "surely this scene is more vivid because the poet has lived through the execution of the saintly Laud and the martyred Charles." Now does Bennett believe that the traditional, or intertextual, element is what enriches a poem, or does he believe that produces merely conventional versifying, and it is the poet's personal contribution that brings it to life? It looks as if he is inconsistent; and in so far as he believes the

[2] *Poetry of the Passion*. By J. A. W. BENNETT. Oxford University Press, £17.50.

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second, he is surely not doing Donne and Herbert a good turn by returning their works so firmly to tradition.

THE ISSUES RAISED as we try to understand a past text may emerge better from an unpretentious scholarly study than from more ambitious theoretical discussions. Sandra Clark's book on *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers*[3] is another attempt to return writings to a tradition—a more popular tradition this time, and more out-of-the-way writings.

Elizabethan pamphlets may seem at first glance a byway of literature for scholars only: who on earth reads, or has heard of, *A Dial for Dainty Darlings*, or *Tobacco Tortured, Or, The Filthy Fumes of Tobacco Refined*? Yet the titles are irresistible; and not all the pamphlets are, or deserve to be, forgotten. The rogue pamphlets of Dekker and Greene have always had a following, and Thomas Nashe writes with a lurid brilliance that amounts at times to genius. The very qualities that make their writings inaccessible and incoherent—the raciness, the lack of organisation, the closeness to the spoken language—can bring them suddenly and marvellously to life. Here is Robert Greene telling about a young man who insisted that his dealings with a whore take place in the darkest room possible:

> "How now sir quoth I, is not this dark enough, he sitting him down on the bed side, fetched a deep sigh, and said, Indifferent, so, so, but there is a glimpse of light in the tiles, somebody may by fortune see us, In faith no, quoth I, none but God, God, says he, why can God see us here?"

Sandra Clark opens her book with a disclaimer that seems to rob it of all possible interest: "Those who approach this book expecting to find a historical study of Elizabethan pamphlets . . . will be disappointed. The pamphlets are treated from a literary point of view." Does this mean that instead of using them to explore the tensions of Elizabethan society, she is merely going to tell us about rhetorical figures and literary conventions?

It does mean this, but it turns out to be less of a limitation than we might think—even to be an advantage. For in the first place, no clear distinction is possible between the pamphlets as evidence for the social historian, and as material for literary study. The cony-catcher as symbol of universal corruption, the thieves' world as a kind of counter-society, are stereotypes that run from satirist to satirist, and determine even the details of presentation. In the days before copyright, even before a

[3] *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers*. By SANDRA CLARK. Athlone Press, £18.00.

Gore Vidal

His new novel

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Books & Bookmen

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clear conception of the act of individual composition (that story of Greene's I have just quoted derives from Erasmus), the power of convention and of the *topos* is enormous. Even the claim to be writing from first-hand knowledge is a convention, and seems to turn up almost automatically. And so Sandra Clark can speak of "a kind of group or communal mentality among pamphleteers, and of a common fund of material, themes and attitudes", and goes on to claim that this demonstrates "how instinctive association of ideas governs or controls literary form to a greater extent than consciously-made connections and preplanned structures."

This seems to lead to despair about the possibility of any real evidence for social history: if we cannot disentangle what the pamphleteers are telling us about plague or cony-catching, women or Roman Catholics, from the stereotypes by which they perceive their material, we seem on the path to the Foucaultian view that all we can study is modes of perception. But even if this were true, it would still turn out that there was a great deal left to study—including social change. Ms Clark is able to show a tension in the pamphlets between the conservatism of popular thought and the changes taking place in sensibility:

> "The whole movement away from fixed standards of authority, from analogical structures as a basis for the conception both of the universe and of man's place within society, from the style of writing and thinking expressed in the formal periods of Ciceronian prose, is one that the pamphleteers feared and often tried to reject but nonetheless could not escape."

Thus when Dekker depicts the emnity between rich and poor (he calls them "the Two Nations", anticipating Disraeli by 230 years) we can—with the help of Ms Clark—recognise the stock figures on either side, and the stock complaints about hoarding and usury, but the prose reveals a freshness of sensibility even as it rehearses the stale *topos*:

> "Hire warehouses, vaults under ground, and cellars in the City, and in them imprison all necessary provision for the belly, till the long nails of famine break open the doors."

Through her exploration of the modes of writing, Ms Clark is able to show "the trend away from authority and traditional wisdom", and the social history she excludes from the front door keeps making its way in by the back.

HISTORIANS ARE professionally committed to the view that the past is different, that our ancestors did not use our concepts or see with our eyes—though the historian is equally committed to the view that the past can be explained. When a single far-reaching hypothesis can draw together elements of past behaviour that have not hitherto made a great deal of sense, we have an historical breakthrough: it does not happen often, and one of the most rewarding breakthroughs of our time was achieved by Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. His new book, *Man and the Natural World*,[4] is not so brilliant or so magisterial, and bears rather clearer traces of the card-index, but it is none the less fascinating and illuminating.

Its main thesis is the gradual overthrow of the anthropocentric view of early modern times: the view that the world and all other species had been created for man's sake. This view took some bizarre forms: the physician George Chapman in 1705 explained that the Creator made the horse's excrement smell sweet, because he knew that men would often be in its vicinity. It was undermined by several tendencies: the rise of natural history, compassion for the suffering of animals, the need for conservation (the anti-pollution lobby turns out to have some very remote forebears: the inhabitants of St Botolph's, Aldgate, complained in 1627 that the fumes from the alum factory at St Katherine's by the Tower were poisoning the inhabitants and that the waste matter was killing the fish in the Thames).

Thomas is aware that the old view was replaced by something much more complicated, and at times the story seems even more complicated than he admits: thus his chapter on "Trees and Flowers" recounts the replacement of a utilitarian by a sentimental attitude to vegetable nature, and this is treated as part of the same process that replaced the anthropocentric view by one that respects the natural world in its own right. But is it? Planting trees "for emotional satisfaction", or the keeping of pets, may be just a displaced anthropocentrism.

Religion and the Decline of Magic offered complex materialist explanations for the prevalence of magic and the rise of witchcraft, and though *Man and the Natural World* has more exposition and less explanation, it argues generally on the same lines. Thomas is Marxist enough to quote with approval the opinion that "it was not their religion, but the coming of private property and a money economy, which led Christians to exploit the natural world in a way the Jews had never done." And his chapter on "Compassion for the Brute Creation" ends with a discussion of why, if the intellectual possibility for animals' rights had always been there, it was only in the early modern period that it was realised; he answers this in terms of social change.

When classes arose which were sufficiently detached from the agricultural process to develop a new sensibility, campaigning against cruelty to animals could begin. Such campaigning had a class element in it, though of a complicated kind. The

[4] *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*. By KEITH THOMAS. Allen Lane, £14.95.

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"age-old association of hunting with class privilege" meant that there was a radical element in attacks on animal sport; though when it came to effective reform, it was proletarian sports—cock-throwing, bull-baiting and cock-fighting—which were outlawed, whereas the gentlemen's sports continued. But though many of his explanations are materialist, Thomas rejects the crude materialism that moves direct from technology to sensibility, without taking the whole social picture into account: it was not improvements in transport that created tourism, any more than "new techniques of aqua-tinting and lithography explain the demand for books with picturesque views."

Like all good social history, *Man and the Natural World* is full of fascinating insights on the way. Among dozens of things I have learned from reading it is that the treatment of trees closely parallels that of children: when infants were swaddled trees were pollarded; when educational theories became less repressive, there was a reaction against unnatural "mutilation" of trees. Or that there are similar parallels between fashions in flowers and fashions in clothes. The shift in aesthetic sensibility from the beauty of the regular and cultivated to beauty as wildness is helpfully documented, and explained on similar lines: those "whose social position allowed them to contemplate with equanimity the prospect of leaving agricultural land uncultivated were those who responded to wild nature." What does such a remark do to our love of Wordsworth? Can we as readers continue to delight in the Alpine landscape with its "Woods decaying never to be destroyed", while as theorists we reflect that he did not need to earn his living from the soil? The literary academic seems, as part of his double identity, obliged to answer yes; the nutritionist, after all, does not have to cease enjoying his meals.

FINALLY, THE BIOGRAPHER. Is the past accessible to him, or must he see it in all its distant strangeness, as shards and blurred hieroglyphs? In a way he must, for it is the very nature of biography that it tells us what cannot really be known. The historian's generalisations can gain a cumulative plausibility as the evidence mounts up, but to interpret a life is rather like interpreting a poem: it opens out in so many directions. No one wants a new biography of Milton that simply tells us where he was in each year, or what he published when, but once one begins to interpret his marriage, his career, and his political views, the subject becomes as elusive as a Shakespeare sonnet.

Not that this need lead to scepticism or hesitation. A. N. Wilson[5] is a boldly opinionated bio-

[5] *The Life of John Milton.* By A. N. WILSON. Oxford University Press, £9.95.

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grapher, but his very boldness, like that of the interpreter of poems, is a kind of admission that others may see—and have seen—the same things differently. He uses the biographer's conditional from time to time: e.g., of Milton's time at Cambridge, "how dull it must have been to have to listen to some not very intelligent don, droning on about the rules of medieval disputation." Lest that seem all too reminiscent of the vapidity of so much biography, I will add that Wilson then goes on to suggest that translating Plato into Latin must have been one of the more attractive tasks for an undergraduate, and this leads him to suggest that if Milton had stayed on and become a don, he would have been one of the Cambridge Platonists. There's a good deal of neo-Platonism in Milton's early poetry, and I share Wilson's high estimate of its imaginative power in Renaissance art and poetry, so it seems churlish to remark that there's no real evidence for this speculation.

There's a good deal more speculation in the book. Did the Earl of Bridgewater find *Comus* in rather bad taste? Did Milton's father begin to get impatient at his son's failure to earn a living? Was the ill-fated marriage to Mary Powell precipitated by the sight of his brother's domestic happiness? Mr Wilson is scrupulous about showing when he knows and when he's guessing, and what he has written can be described as a scholarly biography with speculation added. And perhaps that is what we want. The effect of merely scholarly biographies is to make one feel one would rather just have read the documents oneself.

How does a biography of a poet differ from a biography of anyone else? Clearly, it must talk about poems; but if the sections on the life simply alternate with self-contained sections on the work, then we have not got a literary biography, but a critical book and a life bound up in the same covers. On the other hand, if the poems are used as material for the life (as they are, for instance, in Moorman's *Life of Wordsworth*) then we may watch sadly as they are dismantled into not very reliable evidence, instead of being treated as poems.

Mr Wilson cannot escape from this dilemma any more than anyone else, but I found him never less than entertaining about the poems, and he seldom says what you would expect. It is refreshing to read a discussion of *Paradise Lost* that stresses its joyfulness, and on *Paradise Regained* his interpretation is very similar to that of Professor Lord ("Folklore and Myth in *Paradise Regained*") in the Martz *Festschrift*. Both of them point out that Satan presents the richness of a cultural tradition which had been Milton's own, and which the Son austerely rejects; though whereas Lord the scholar presents this, rather speculatively, as a rejection of myth and epic in favour of the simple hero of folk-lore, Wilson the novelist sees it in more orthodox terms as the rejection of Greek in favour of Hebrew culture, and reminds us (a happy use of biographical material) that Milton read the Hebrew Bible every day.

IN CONCLUSION, here is a vividly controversial example of returning a work to its original context—not, this time, a set of conventions, but the particular situation that gave rise to it. *Arcades* is a charming and rather conventional masque written for the Countess of Derby for performance at Harefield House. One of the Countess's daughters, Lady Anne Audley, was married to a man of almost unbelievable brutality, who was executed in 1631. Mr Wilson tells us the sordid story, and then asserts that without it "the next major development in Milton's literary career [i.e. the writing of *Arcades*] is incomprehensible." It is not quite clear if this is a critical or a biographical remark, whether it is *Arcades* itself or the fact of writing it which would be incomprehensible.

The former is surely nonsense: the Audley story is in no way part of the meaning of the masque, and any theory which insists that the circumstances of composition must be seen as part of the meaning cannot distinguish between a poem and a document. Even the latter is uncertain: since, as Mr Wilson then tells us, we do not know whether *Arcades* was written before or after the calamity, knowledge of the episode cannot tell us anything

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about the writing. I am glad Mr Wilson has told me this story, and I found it sobering to read of an execution at which even the most dedicated opponent of capital punishment can scarce forbear to cheer; but I cannot see that it forms any part of a life of Milton.

When one of our wittiest younger novelists writes a biography, you would expect him to be a bit tendentious. It wouldn't be much fun if he wasn't. Mr Wilson is not sparing of controversial asides—from which I learn that he dislikes revolutions, progressive education and (so it seems) both modern Christian apologists and agnostics (see pages 126, 143, 206, 209). He also dislikes Cromwell intensely, and one element in Milton he cannot stomach is his apocalyptic enthusiasm for the Puritan cause.

On this he is less scrupulous than usual. He quotes the famous sentence "Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks"; and follows it with an atrocity story of how Cromwell burst in on a very old clergyman called Wilson (an ancestor, perhaps?), abused him, and tortured his son. Now I share Mr Wilson's dislike of revolutionary bullying, but there is no reason to connect this story in any way with Milton; and no justification whatever for saying twenty pages later that "Cromwell's torturing of aged clergymen seemed to Milton a certain sign that God was revealing himself." At this point I wish Mr Wilson did regard 17th-century politics as more of a shard or a blurred hieroglyph.

Eastern Approaches

Recent Fiction—By CLIVE SINCLAIR

WHAT'S IN A briefcase? Mine bulges with the five novels I have chosen to review. Read in rapid succession they displace my own life, substituting a strangely consistent fiction, which tempts me to turn out a sixth volume, a distillation of them all. Occasionally, when composing my stories, I encounter the very characters I am writing about. No sooner do I begin this review than I bump into Malcolm Bradbury at the University of East Anglia, Russell Hoban at the London Book Fair, and D. M. Thomas at a Writer's Day organised by PEN. I begin to make those familiar connections between literature and life that would be called paranoid in anyone other than a writer.

At the same time I am fully aware that this isn't my story at all. A similar thing happens to Petworth, the aforementioned Bradbury's un-history man in *Rates of Exchange*[1] (not to be confused, as he often is, with a different Petworth in the same author's *The History Man*). Our Dr Petworth is a teacher of linguistics, a scholar and a diplomat, forever flying to arcane corners of the world on behalf of the British Council. Now he is in Slaka, that mysterious satellite of the Soviet Union, waiting in the airport for his guide, waiting for the familiar story to begin:

> "... a story not of frontiers and guardposts, spies and imprisonments, beatings and treacheries, but a simple story, commensurate with his talents and limitations, a story of small hotels and large lecture-rooms, of faculty lounges where grey professors talk about incomprehensible educational reforms ... and of occasional evening receptions where, drink in hand, Petworth can chatter brightly on about matters of common fascination, Hobson's Choice and Sod's Law, birds in the hand and frogs in the throat, a story of, in short, everyday life."

Bradbury, not le Carré. But stay! Who is that guilty-looking fellow with the fat briefcase who slouches so reluctantly through the customs as he leaves Slaka? What has happened to Petworth? And what is in his briefcase? He has met Katya Princip, magical realist novelist, with whom he has had a passionate fling. As a result his briefcase contains more than his innocent lectures; within is Princip's latest manuscript, an illicit thing. Once he has spirited the typescript out of the country he is required to deliver it to a publisher in Paris, collect the royalties at a later date, change them from francs to dollars and smuggle them back into Slaka upon his next lecture tour, whereupon Princip will slake his thirst. The unpublished book is thus the story of requited love, and its publication will authorise Petworth's transfer from a comic English novel to a continental fantasy. He is saved by a fortunate mischance when his briefcase is offloaded at Frankfurt and detonated by the security police as a suspected bomb.

A YEAR LATER in another part of Germany—

[1] *Rates of Exchange*. By MALCOLM BRADBURY. Secker & Warburg, £7.95.

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Freiburg, 1982, to be precise—another briefcase is detonated by the bomb disposal squad. With good reason, this time, since it is le Carré (*The Little Drummer Girl*)[2] not Bradbury. The briefcase, formerly the possession of Professor Minkel, an Israeli dove, has been doctored by Charlie, the little drummer girl, and the Arab terrorists she has infiltrated on behalf of the Zionists. Charlie, however, is neither a terrorist nor a Zionist but a red-headed English actress, a Vanessa Redgrave on the make. So why is she carrying such a hot briefcase? Because, like Petworth, she has fallen into someone else's fiction.

Le Carré wants us to believe that he is actually a reconstructionist, in the manner of those who write popular histories. By using sentences such as "The thing that struck everyone afterwards was the soundlessness of the operation", he is clearly hinting that he has chewed over the events described with various informants. No, the real author, the man who declares on page 47 that "the fiction . . . could begin" is Kurtz (a.k.a. Schulmann and Spielberg), a man well acquainted with the heart of darkness. Thereafter it is he who creates imaginary lives and loves for the characters in his thrall.

Now, one look at Katya Princip will convince even the most dubious as to why Petworth acted so impetuously, but what persuaded Charlie to take the part Kurtz had specially written for her? It is true that as an actress she might be supposed not to have a fixed character, but was the glamour of a starring role in the theatre of the real sufficient inducement for her to risk her life? Perhaps, like Petworth, she did it for love? Certainly she was infatuated with Gadi Becker (a.k.a. Joseph), romantic henchman of Kurtz. And le Carré does acknowledge the power of emotion. "The Zionists kill for fear and hate", proclaims Khalil (the terrorist whose death will end the pantomime), "Palestinians for love and justice." It is a distinction that le Carré seems to endorse. His Israelis are a hateful bunch; Kurtz, for example, is "possessed by a deep and awesome hatred", while the dark eyes of another burn with "rabbinical anger" (though this seems a bit hard on rabbis). In addition they all possess the cunning of Mephistopheles. They are, in short, stage Jews from the Victorian age.

Like her more virginal ancestors, Charlie is mesmerised by these brainy, bullet-eyed men; for Kurtz and Becker owe more to the likes of Rider Haggard than Conrad. Meet Jacob Meyer, evil genius of *Benita*, "a man of about forty years of age, not over tall, slight and active in build, with a pointed black beard, regular, Semitic features, a complexion of an ivory pallor which even the African sun did not seem to tan, and dark, lustrous eyes that appeared, now to sleep, and now to catch the fire of the thoughts within." Despite this not unpleasing appearance there was something in Meyer's character that repelled Benita. "She felt that he was filled with unsatisfied ambitions and desires, and that to attain to them he would shrink at nothing." Nevertheless, when he spoke it was in a voice that "compelled her attention." Later Benita realised that she could no longer "control her mind and imagination", and that she had somehow become "interwoven with the objects of his life, and was henceforth necessary for their fulfilment, as though she were someone whom he had been seeking for years on years." For Meyer read Kurtz, for Benita read Charlie. What chance had she against a man whose voice contained an "animal force that had so overpowered . . . countless other unlikely collaborators"? How else could le Carré successfully disguise the soft centre of his novel? It discloses an antiquarian rather than an anti-Semite or even an anti-Zionist. There is no reason to doubt the warmth of his thanks to the many Israelis—"in particular, certain past and serving officers of the intelligence fraternity"—whom he mentions but does not name in the Foreword.

THIS FOREWORD SEEMS to belong to a more academic tradition, one that respects fact above fiction. Not only is there a conscientious listing of sources, there is also, in the words "of the Palestinians, some are dead, others are taken prisoner", a suggestion that history has merged with his fiction, that the blood his characters spill is real. Fact is his inspiration. Inspiration took Russell Hoban by surprise, also in Israel. He describes the moment thus in the Acknowledgements at the beginning of *Pilgermann*.[3]

> "It was my daughter Esmé and her husband Moti who on May 15th, 1980 took me to the ruined stronghold of Montfort in Galilee, built in the twelfth century by the knights of the Teutonic Order of Saint Mary. . . . The look of the stars burning and flickering over Montfort, those three stars between the Virgin and the Lion with their upward swing like the curve of a scythe, the stare into the darkness, the hooded eagleness of the stronghold high over the gorge, the paling into dawn of its gathered flaunt and power precipitated Pilgermann into his time and place and me into a place I hadn't even known was there."

The movement described here, from a precise delineation to a vaguer time and space, nicely captures the spirit of the book, which is a series of meditations upon brilliantly defined incidents. Pilgermann, now nothing more than waves and particles,

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[2] *The Little Drummer Girl.* By JOHN LE CARRÉ. Hodder & Stoughton, £8.95; Knopf, $15.95.

[3] *Pilgermann.* By RUSSELL HOBAN. Cape, £7.95.

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inhabited a man's body toward the end of the eleventh century. But being a Jew he was not a history man, nor is *Pilgermann* a historical novel. "Why are you weeping?" asks Bembel Rudzuk, his Islamic comrade. "I am suffering from an attack of history", replies Pilgermann.

Both Petworth and Charlie are enticed into history's spotlight, but Pilgermann remains as much a spectator as his Jewishness will allow. Being the narrator, such an attitude obviously controls the direction of the text, which deliberately eschews the captivating story. Pilgermann explains:

> "My perceptions are uneven, my understanding patchy but I have action; I go. I can't tell this as a story because it isn't a story; a story is what remains when you leave out most of the action; a story is a coherent sequence of picture cards: *One:* Samson in the vineyards of Timnah; *Two:* the lion comes roaring at Samson; *Three:* Samson tears the lion apart. That's a story but actually the main part of the action may have been that there was a butterfly in Samson's field of vision the whole time. The picture cards don't show the butterfly because if they did they would have to explain it. But you can't explain the butterfly."

Though Hoban tries. He writes like a cabbalist, turning immaterial concepts into sensuous images. Pilgermann sees a beautiful woman through an open window. Her name is Sophia, which means wisdom. He climbs a ladder and is accommodated. In the *Zohar* the Torah is described as a woman who draws men to her with signs of love until she has "uncovered all her mysteries, neither keeping back nor hiding any single one." Unfortunately Pilgermann takes this metaphor literally and mistakes the seduction of Sophia for the getting of wisdom, the goal of life, as a result of which he is castrated by her irate husband, an anti-Semitic tax-collector.

Bradbury's Katya Princip is also an educator who makes a similar connection between sexual and textual possession:

> "Well if you don't have me, you have my book. . . . And if you open it very carefully, and learn the words very slowly, and look for the hidden places, the corners that are secret, then in a certain way you can have me. Perhaps, now you know me, you will have me much more like that than if we decided to be silly and go and make some love."

In the end, all Petworth gains is sexual experience without the after-effects suffered by Pilgermann, so that his life is not changed, and he misses the opportunity to embark upon the pilgrimage after which the latter is named. While Hoban's hero lies unmanned in the dust, Christ pays a visit. Inspired, he sets off for Jerusalem, another materialisation of ineffable wisdom, but fails to arrive. His companions on this impossible journey include a succulent pig, the headless corpse of the tax-collector, a slaughtered bear, and Death on his horse (figures that have also danced through the imaginations of Bosch and Bergman), the last-named being responsible for Pilgermann's present incorporate state. Which is, of course, his inevitable destination; the meeting at infinity. Attempting to anticipate this posthumous knowledge, Pilgermann, with the cooperation of his friend, Bembel Rudzuk, contrives to design a floor that is "contiguous with infinity." Before long, however, miracles are ascribed to this wonderful pattern and monetary offerings are cemented into the tiles, transforming it from an abstract equivalent of the divine into something like the Golden Calf. Subsequently Antioch, where Pilgermann is becalmed, is besieged by the Crusaders. Atrocities are committed upon the floor (christened "Hidden Lion" by Pilgermann), and the tiles are drenched with blood, including that of its creators. By then, however, Death is a welcome guest.

ON THE FIRST EVENING of Pesach, when Jews sit down to meditate upon the escape from Egypt, an extra place is laid at the table for Elijah. At some point during the Seder meal the door is opened and an invitation extended to the invisible prophet. Whether he comes or not, the last line of the prayers

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is always the same, "L'SHANAH HABA-AH BIRUSHALAYIM", "Next Year in Jerusalem", although it was for long a secret hope that redemption would come once again on Passover, Elijah being the herald of the ultimate deliverance. Thus, locked in a cell on his last night on earth, Pilgermann imagines that his slop-bucket is Elijah's cup, even though it is the mid-summer month of Tammuz, when the temple walls were breached by Titus and Nebuchadnezzar. Whereupon the doors to cell and city alike are flung open by the treacherous Firouz, and Antioch is also breached. Like parallel lines, all meet upon the magical tiles:

> "And here is Questing the death-hound, here is Elijah for whom Firouz has opened the door, here is Messiah following on Elijah, here is the giant Bohemond foul and stinking with excrement that stains his scarlet cross as he stands on Hidden Lion lifting his sword vertically with both hands and plunging it down again and again like a man breaking ground for a post-hole. All around him are broken tiles and among them are heaped the gold and silver coins that were mortared into the tiles."

Brandishing his sword, this fearsome Frankish hero ("my world and my Jerusalem") becomes the Angel of Death, and Pilgermann passes over from the here and now into immaterial space and time, wise after the event.

A DOOR IS ALSO OPENED to admit Elijah at the end of Joseph Roth's *Job, The Story of a Simple Man*,[4] and once again the call is answered, but not by Death. On the contrary, Mendel Singer, the simple man, is restored to life by the reappearance of Menuchim, his long-lost son, formerly an idiot, now a musical genius. Foul-breathed Death re-emerges, however, in D. M. Thomas's *Ararat* as the repulsive Finn, veteran of Moush, Erzindjan, Baiburt, Trebizond, Kharput, Babi Yar, Dachau, Birkenau, Belsen, Auschwitz, Sobibor, Maidanek, Treblinka and, more recently, Indo-China; butcher of Armenians, Jews, gypsies and everyone else. But when *Job* was first published in 1930 it was still possible to imagine a happy ending for a European Jew, even if it did occur in America.

You'll recall that the afflictions of the original Job were occasioned by a wager between God and Satan. Job was an upright man who feared the Lord. Sure he loves you, said Satan, you've built a hedge around him. Give him *tsuris* and he'll soon curse you. I bet. You're on, said God, all that he hath is in thy power. So Satan did his worst. And thus poor Job suddenly found himself the subject of a Book, providing Roth with a ready-made plot. Mendel Singer, like his prototype, was innocent of any wrong-doing, but that never was a guarantee of security. And he too got afflicted. First his two healthy sons were conscripted. Jews regarded this as a calamity, according to Rider Haggard, "since in soldiering there is little profit." Actually *shtetl* Jews like Mendel considered conscription a sentence of death, or defilement at the very least. Mendel's wife, Deborah, a more worldly person, begs a fixer to rescue her boys, but she only has enough money to save one, a dreadful choice that pre-dates Sophie's by some years.

Thus Shemariah was saved, only to be killed fighting for Uncle Sam in the Great War, destroying also the new life the Singers had made for themselves in America. For Shemariah had prospered, and was able to offer his parents passage to the promised land. They accepted reluctantly on account of their daughter, Miriam, who was giving the Cossacks what they were accustomed to taking. But poor Menuchim was too sickly to travel. Nevertheless, they were content, until the catastrophe none foresaw occurred: Shemariah killed; Jonas, his brother, missing; Miriam insane; and Deborah dead of grief. Heartbroken Mendel plans to sever all remaining relationships, including that with God. He builds up a fire, meaning to burn his prayer book, *tallis* and *tefilin*, but though he curses God with his tongue his hands will not follow suit. (The Nazis had no such compunction; on 10 May 1933 they burned all Roth's books.) Mendel's friends come to comfort him, but he will accept none. They suggest he is being tested, like Job, but Mendel sees only the blind cruelty of an *ispravnik*, a Russian official. Then, at Pesach, a miracle occurs: Menuchim returns. The ancient story has repeated itself.

The Book of Job must have offered a tempting model for European Jewry between the wars, and it must have caught Roth's fancy during one of his more optimistic moments. But pessimists like I. J. Singer wouldn't allow its triumphant ending to erase the memory of the ferocity that preceded it. Who could afford to put their trust in such a whimsical Creator? Certainly not the Jews. When the Book of Job appears in I. J. Singer's masterpiece, *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, it is full of foreboding. While Max is sitting *shiva* for his murdered brother he reads from it, and he is clutching it when he dies. There is no reconciliation in *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, only the chilling realisation that everything the Jews had got was built upon sand.

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[4] *Job, The Story of a Simple Man*. By JOSEPH ROTH. Translated by DOROTHY THOMPSON. Chatto & Windus, £7.95.

THERE ARE MANY BOOKS that describe what happened when the sand finally shifted, D. M.

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Thomas's *The White Hotel* among them. Clouds of history drift through his new book,[5] but the rock at its centre is Ararat itself, symbol of inspiration.

At the aforementioned Writer's Day Thomas spoke eloquently of himself as a poet turned novelist. He composed his books not in a relentless schematic way, he said, but as a series of improvisations upon given images, which gradually develop a self-perpetuating momentum, like Pilgermann's journey. But while Pilgermann progresses from life to death, buying wisdom with parts of his body, *Ararat* behaves like an amphisbaena, for a story within a story must end where it began. It begins with a Russian poet, Rozanov by name, being asked to improvise a story on the theme of inspiration. He imagines a competition between three writers, each of whom must produce a variation upon Ararat, though each is also a version of Rozanov's life and loves. At which, a pause: just as Rozanov fears to exchange his vision of Ararat for the reality, so it is difficult to describe the book of the same name without making it sound like a Chinese puzzle. And that would be a pity, for it deals with that delicate relationship between the written and the unwritten word.

Thomas's Author's Note lists a number of books which sustained his own. Hoban acknowledges religious scholars, le Carré thanks spies, Bradbury is grateful to "those members of the British Council English Studies seminar who, over several summers, in various long rooms in Cambridge colleges, helped me in more than one sense to invent a language", and Roth, had he bothered, would have thanked God. Let us now imagine how some of these writers might react when faced with the *mot juste*: Hoban would fall upon it like a demented rabbi, eager to extract its invisible essence; le Carré would prod it carefully with his pencil lest it be booby-trapped; Bradbury would try to improve upon it; and Thomas would experience a thrilling tingle of recognition, for had Pushkin not used that very word?

Yes, Thomas is a bookish writer. Several times within *Ararat* scribes sit down with their virgin notebooks, only to discover that the story they intended to write has been begun elsewhere, either in a book or a biography, leaving them to tease out new endings. So Surkov (in the first improvisation within the improvisation), having already taken on the role of Pushkin in a feverish fantasy, sets about completing that poet's unfinished fragment, *Egyptian Nights*; and Rozanov, having entertained his latest conquest until dawn with his improvisation, anticipates "the rapture of silence and inspiration" when he would open "the white book, pick up his pen; and, as madonnas and goddesses gazed down at him, he would go on with his long, secret poem about Meyerhold and his wife Zinaida."

The latter is still unwritten, but Thomas offers two possible endings for the former. In the first the Italian *improvisatore*'s song of Cleopatra's sanguine love life leads step by step to Pushkin's inevitable duel with d'Anthès. Feeling personally responsible for the poet's death, the author quickly supplies a second ending, in which the *improvisatore*, having told how Cleopatra offered her would-be lovers a night of bliss in exchange for their heads, himself experiences a night of unprecedented carnality, only to be accidentally beheaded the following morning.

Both these versions offer complex examples of the relationship between the word and the world; either fiction is making history, or it is anticipating reality. But both cases are deeply embedded in a labyrinthine text, which seems to be saying that beyond language is nothing, that even the holocausts visited by Finn were literary events. However, le Carré, while using the same ironic device of having fiction become fact, as when Charlie meets the brother of the man with whom she had a non-existent affair, and clothes really do get ripped off in a passionate frenzy, concludes vice versa: the world is real, language but an unsatisfactory substitute. Hoban isn't sure about either. "Not only is storytelling denied me but history also—" observes Pilgermann, "I may well be reporting nothing more than spiritual images and metaphysical illusions."

RATES OF EXCHANGE is an ambitious novel, for language not only sets the limits of its world, but also suggests a world beyond. In order to achieve this independence for Slaka (from the book, if not from Russia) Bradbury has invented Slakan, examples of which may be found throughout the text. This language, like everything else in Slaka, is subject to inexplicable changes; disorienting for solid, occidental Petworth. In short, there is no fixed rate of exchange for anything; everything is subject to barter, and therefore a risk.

Bradbury also has taken considerable risks with this novel; not so much formal (he is no Katya Princip), but emotional ones. For in the volatile East, where God's wager with Satan still seems to be in progress, the traditional defences of the English novelist seem more like evasions than ever. So Bradbury deliberately lets them drop, allowing events (and some people) to conspire to make Petworth a character of emotional—though never historical—importance. *Rates of Exchange* is essential reading, not only as a guide to Slaka, but as a compass directing the English novel eastwards. This is vital; for, as these books show, the best stories rise in the East.

[5] *Ararat.* By D. M. THOMAS. Gollancz, £6.95.

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LETTERS

Misreading the ABC

EVEN AFTER READING Mr Frank Offenbach's shocking descriptions in the April ENCOUNTER, one cannot but feel that Israel is too much in the highlight. He may have used Western news reports on the Lebanese War only to bemoan the death of objectivity among correspondents, yet he did not choose Malaysia or Thailand but a case concerning Israel. There were three pieces about us in the same issue. Should we not be left alone a little?

For an Israeli this country is, naturally, the centre of his world. We are not more provincial than others; but it would be artificial for us to think preponderantly of nuclear disarmament when threatened with being driven into the sea by conventional methods. It is easy for Mr Patrick Seale, among the mists of an English winter, to dismiss this threat as old nonsense. Yet the PLO—which he seems to equate with "the Palestinians" and European governments accept as their true and only representatives —stubbornly refuses to delete it from its basic document.

Lest I am misunderstood I'd better declare that I am a convinced "dove", and I consider the official policy of Israel to be wrong. (Mr Seale's attributing this policy to Mr Begin's government and absolving the Labour Party only shows his self-confident lack of knowledge of the local political scene.) I consider this policy wrong for fear of "contaminating the Jewishness of the state"—not for reasons dear to liberals and leftists. They think the PLO is right and the Palestinians are "underdogs." I do not.

It may have been wrong to start the Lebanese War. What Israel shall get out of it will depend on the results of peaceful Palestinians having blown to smithereens the first post-War president of Lebanon, Mr Bashir J'mail and on the kind of pressure Mr Shultz will exert to achieve an American foreign-policy success. But it is not for Mr Seale to decide whether Israeli troops freed the Lebanese population from PLO terror. They did; and the fact has nothing to do with the original war aims. The then current military situation may not have justified the war, but Mr Seale is exaggerating in calling the situation "peaceful" after the murderous attack of one of the PLO groups on the Israeli ambassador in London. A lull is anyway irrelevant. For years there was not a shot fired across the Syrian border before the Syrians attacked us in 1973 and we only managed to stay alive by the skin of our teeth. Israel is condemned by the rules of a heads-you-lose, tails-I-win game. If you prove in fact that you are stronger, this in itself shows you were not in real danger.

Mr Seale is less than knowledgeable in denying new opportunities created by the war (and, for that matter, by other execrable steps taken by the Begin government). The gentlemen of the Israeli Peace Movement argued for long that PLO threats were not to be taken seriously, that Mr Arafat is reasonable and prepared to negotiate. They even tried for years to meet him—in vain. He was driven out of Beirut, his military power broken, and—lo! he received them. He even kissed a child in their presence.

The many "Arab peace signals" Mr Seale has seen amounted to nothing—Egypt excepted. The Egyptian example tends to show that, contrary to his opinion, Mr Begin is not always afraid to make concessions in return for peace. Some of us are afraid that though new opportunities were created by the war, the Palestinians for some reason will never exploit them. Thus they will compel Israel to remain in all the territories. Israel—Western war-reporting notwithstanding—is democratic to the marrow. The Palestinians, in the end, after two or three generations, will be represented according to their numbers; and Israel will become the technologically most advanced Levantine state.

WE ARE NOT harbingers of "salvation for all." Mr Seale quietly reproaches us that Israel invaded Lebanon not in order to give back "Lebanon to the Lebanese" but in the pursuit of national interest as perceived by Mr Begin. Undoubtably. Is it not exasperating to be reproached for such egotism? Which Western nation, under liberal or even socialist rule, went to war to give Ex back to the Exese? If it will satisfy Mr Seale, he can have signed statements of Israelis that we do not have wings.

It is galling to be taught Middle Eastern realities by one who does not do all his homework. "The fact is that this particular Ashkenazi [he writes of Mr Begin] climbed to power by deliberately exploiting and giving voice to the grievances of Israel's emerging Sephardi majority. This is the ABC of Israeli politics." Mr Seale seems to have misread the ABC—perhaps because we use the right-to-left Hebrew alphabet. What he is sure about is certainly *not* a fact. Whatever the Opposition might have said about Mr Begin's "ethnics" during the 1981 elections, they never dreamt of accusing him in the 1977 elections. I am sorry to have to correct Mr Seale's ABC, but 1977 was the year when Mr Begin "climbed to power" in elections as democratic and honest as in the best of Western lands.

Few Israelis think that foreign observers should forfeit their right to say anything about what is happening here. It is only that we should not be told *ex cathedra* silly things about which we know better. Also, we are not the navel of the world.

BARUCH BER

Tel Aviv
Israel

Germans? Austrians?

IN your May issue, Mr Richard Mayne gave a good appreciation of Czechoslovakia's murdered Foreign Minister, Jan Masaryk. While not holding a brief for the disruptive policies of Czechoslovakia's Sudeten Germans between 1918 and 1938, I must object to the slipshod historiography of Mr Mayne. He states:

> "Its people [i.e. the population of the Czech and Moravian border regions] had never been Germans but citizens of Austro-Hungary. To Austrian-born Hitler, of course, this was a distinction without a difference."

Indeed, it was even a distinction without a difference to myself and to many others, especially on the Left in German pre-1938 politics. For all the Austrians and all the Germans of Bohemia and Moravia ("the lands of the Czech crown") had been subjects of the German King-emperors from times immemorial.

It had only been the upstart Prussian kings and their mountebank Prime Minister, Otto von Bismarck, who,

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by blood and iron, had kicked the Austrian and Sudeten Germans out of the ancient German Reich, thus uniting (or, rather, disuniting) Germany on the so-called "little-German" basis. All decent Liberals, Socialists, Democrats, and Karl Marx's veterans of the erstwhile Communist League considered Bismarck a traitor and were all wholehearted "Greater Germans."

Thus, in 1918, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated, the new Austrian Republic in its constitution stated that it formed an integral part of the German (Weimar) Republic, and only armed threats of the Western Allies forced young "German Austria" (this was its official name), including its Sudeten German districts, to desist from *Anschluss* under Social-Democratic and Liberal auspices. The Sudeten Germans even had to be subdued by the armed might of the new-born Czechoslovak Republic, and this was what led to the festering hostility of the Sudeten Germans to the new, Prague-centred democracy, and what made the Austrians join with rejoicing in the Nazi-engineered *Anschluss* (the joining of the country) with the German Reich. It was the Western Allies and their imposed peace treaties of 1919-1921 which created the Sudeten irredenta and the Austrians' betrayal of democracy.

HENRY HELLMANN

London

IT'S TOUGH to be accused of "slipshod historiography" simply for treading on irredentist dreams—especially when the accuser himself slips. It was in 1919, not 1918, that the Austrian constituent assembly voted Austria part of the German republic. But let that pass.

On the substantive point, the people living in the Sudetenland in the 1930s had not (I repeat) been German citizens. Like those in Austria, they had been subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, whose borders had been set a century before, by the Treaty of Vienna in 1815—the year Bismarck was born. The Empire itself can be dated back even further, to 1804, when Francis proclaimed himself "Francis I, Emperor of Austria."

In both areas, of course, many worthy characters supported Pan-Germanism—as others pursued local separatist aims, while some remained nostalgic for the Habsburgs. Mr Hellmann blames Bismarck and the Western Allies for the irredentist backlash. Its real exploiters, surely, were Hitler, Henlein, and Seyss-Inquart.

While being pedantic, may I correct a possible misreading of the editorial note on my piece? *Postwar*, the book it comes from (just published by Thames & Hudson), is a history, not just a series of articles.

RICHARD MAYNE

London

Rumbold's "Gandhi" & the Truth

I AM HAPPY to see that Sir Algernon Rumbold, in his review of the film, "Gandhi", is so greatly concerned with *the truth* (ENCOUNTER, March). However, I would like to question just a few of his statements.

1. Partition, he says, has opened a path for an "eventual advance of Soviet influence to the Indian Ocean, because a divided sub-continent has never successfully resisted invaders. Abdication in India set the scene for the abdication of all powers (except Russia) in almost all dependent territories." Influence does not necessarily result in invasion; and a considerable American interest has also prevailed in the area since the early 1950s. The US has a base at Diego Garcia; and its Mutual Defence Assistance Treaty with Pakistan in 1954, and the latter's entry into SEATO in the same year, are just two illustrations of the point. Pakistan's departure from SEATO and CENTO has not resulted in the elimination or abdication of US interest or influence in the area. I wonder, incidentally, what the reviewer means by "dependent territories." The countries on the Indian sub-continent—and by sub-continent I mean India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal—are "dependent" on both the Western and Soviet blocs for trade and aid. The bulk of India's trade, for example, is with the West.

2. Gandhi's stock slumped (according to the reviewer) when Linlithgow paid no attention to him. It seems doubtful that Gandhi owed his prestige to the recognition his quirks received from Viceroys. For example, when the Second World War broke out in September 1939, Linlithgow attached the greatest importance to winning the support of Gandhi (and Nehru) for the War effort, because of their popular appeal. The reason? The Viceroy knew that his Executive Council (whose Indian members, bemoans Sir Algernon, never appear in the film) and the Central Legislature did not contain the men who were most representative of Indian public opinion. As for the Congress which Gandhi led, Linlithgow thought it "unjustified in the light of all the teachings of history to try to proscribe or to ignore a great political party which represents unquestionably the spearhead of nationalism" in India. (To Amery, 15 May 1941.)

3. Sir Algernon alleges that Gandhi and the Congress "put their money on Japan" during World War II. Did they really do that? Linlithgow himself confessed (on 5 September 1939) to being "profoundly moved" by Gandhi's sympathy for England. A few days later, a Congress resolution promised Britain support for the War effort if the British assured India of independence after the War. For, the Congress pointed out, if the British were really fighting for freedom, they should have no difficulty in accepting this demand. Because the

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British did not then wish to terminate Empire, they found these terms unacceptable and ignored them. A one-man minority in the Congress, consisting of Subhas Chandra Bose, organised the Indian National Army, which collaborated with the Japanese in South-east Asia. But the Congress itself, especially after the fall of Pearl Harbour in December 1941, stressed that if the Japanese invaded India, Indians would fight them to the last, as freedom could not come through foreign interference or aggression. The British never found evidence that the Congress organised the *Quit India* movement, which started in August 1942, so the question of the Congress organising it to embarrass the British War effort did not arise.

Algernon Rumbold's inaccuracies on these important points only create doubts about his basic "truth": that Gandhi, as leader of the Indian national movement, was responsible for the disorder on the sub-continent, before and after 1947.

ANITA INDER SINGH
Graduate Institute of International Studies
Geneva

Reply

AS REGARDS Dr Anita Singh's first paragraph, the point is that, in the days of the Raj, both Britain and Russia knew that peace between them rested on the maintenance of Afghanistan as a buffer state between their respective territories. Since 1947 Pakistan has been too weak to hold this balance of power against the Soviet Union. Consequently, there was a steady expansion of Soviet influence over Afghanistan, culminating in the entry of Soviet troops over three years ago.

If the Soviet Union were able to establish complete control in Afghanistan (which they are, fortunately, finding difficult), they could use it as a base for intrigue with separatist elements in Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province, for subverting the Pakistan government (just as over a period of 30 years they gradually subverted the Afghan government), and then eventually for military invasion. They might not act in this way, but the capability of their doing so would be created. And if the Soviet Union did invade the sub-continent, they would not stop at Lahore, any more than did Baber when, from a base at Kabul, he founded the Mughal Empire.

One would like to see more realisation among Indians that the hills beyond the Indus are their strategic frontier as well as that of Pakistan. I do not see how the Americans could be of much help unless they could rely on India as an active ally, with all India's great resources.

I used the term "dependent territories" to cover all colonies, mandated territories etc, and not only 'hose in Asia. Some of these, particularly in Africa, having gained independence, are so weak and so mismanage their affairs as to constitute a threat to peace.

NATURALLY Lord Linlithgow and the British government regretted the decision of the Congress High Command in 1939 to require Congress ministries in Indian provinces to resign. This was a sad evasion of responsibility, and Linlithgow perforce had to organise India for victory with the help of millions of Indians of all communities who differed from the Congress Party. There is no question but that the Congress leaders staged the *Quit India* movement in August 1942. The authorities knew what these men were up to, because they intercepted and read their correspondence.

If Nehru and Gandhi thought that such a movement would not result in serious violence, they would have merited an Oscar for naivety. As was inevitable, large bodies of troops had to be diverted from the defence of India to deal with the disorders, just at the moment when the Japanese were approaching India's frontiers. In that way the Congress leaders did indeed put their money on the Japanese; and Sir Richard Attenborough's silence on the subject is deafening in its implication.

ALGERNON RUMBOLD
West Clandon
Surrey

Reaching Heaven

WITH REGARD TO the letter of P. S. Falla in your April issue, it was unfortunate that someone like Ronald Knox embraced the "R. C. Identity Disc" viewpoint. We had a similar case in Dallas last year, when the leader of the Baptist Convention said that the prayers of the Jews never reach Heaven.

These types may be Christians, but they are primarily sectarians, and such pronouncements are harmful to the ecumenical efforts of people of good will.

U.S. District Court (Judge) HENRY A. MENTZ, JR
New Orleans, Louisiana

AUTHORS

Elizabeth Baines's stories have appeared in various magazines and anthologies. Her first novel, *The Fish Lies on the Table*, will be published this autumn by The Women's Press.

Raymond Aron, the noted political philosopher, is a Professor at the Collège de France. Among his books in English translation are *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* (n.e. 1969), *Politics and History* (1979), *War and Industrial Society* (1980), and *Philosopher of War*, his forthcoming study of Clausewitz.

Sidney Hook, Professor Emeritus of New York University, is Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University. His books include *Pragmatism and the Tragic Sense of Life* (1975), *Education and the Taming of Power* (1977), and *Revolution, Reform and Social Justice* (n.e. 1980).

Maurice Cranston is Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics, having spent the last few years on secondment to the European University Institute in Florence. His books include *Politics and Ethics* (1972), *The Mask of Politics* (1973), and his new

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study of the early life and work of Rousseau, *Jean-Jacques* (Allen Lane, 1983).

Iain Hamilton is a former editor of *The Spectator*, and the author—among other books—of *Embarkation for Cythera* (1974) and *The Kerry Kyle* (1980). His biography of Arthur Koestler (following earlier literary critical studies by S. A. Pearson and John Atkins) appeared in 1980, and he is now engaged in revising it for a new edition. It will include a complete bibliography.

Harold Harris was the Literary Editor of the *Evening Standard* in London before he became Editor-in-Chief of Hutchinson, Koestler's British publishers. He is Koestler's Literary Executor and has indicated that there are plans for a full "Life & Times", based on all his papers, to be commissioned in the near future.

David Pryce-Jones's historical study of *Paris in the Third Reich* was published in 1981. He is the author of a biography of Unity Mitford (n.e. 1981), followed this spring by a biography of Cyril Connolly.

John Beloff is Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Edinburgh, and author of *The Existence of Mind* (1962) and *Psychological Sciences* (1973). See also his contribution, entitled "Coming to Terms with Parapsychology" (January 1980), which Koestler invited him to contribute to his ENCOUNTER *Antennae* series.

David Astor was for twenty-seven years the Editor of the London Sunday newspaper *The Observer*, in which Arthur Koestler published his "crusading" articles and launched his various humanitarian campaigns.

Mary Benson is a novelist and journalist living in London. She was born and educated in South Africa, and is the author of several books on the subject (including a biography of Nelson Mandela) which led to her house-arrest, banning and exile.

George Mikes was born in Hungary in 1912, and was London correspondent for various Budapest newspapers from 1938-41, when he joined the Hungarian Service of the BBC. Since 1951 he has been a freelance writer, following his famous *How To Be An Alien* (1946) with such books as *Switzerland for Beginners* (1962), *The Prophet Motive* (1969), *How To Be Decadent* (1977), and *How To Be Seventy* (1982). Among his articles in ENCOUNTER is his memorable "Alien's Return: Letter from Budapest" (September 1965).

The drawing of Arthur Koestler on p. 8 is by **Jaroslav Bradáč.**

Michael Charlton, one of Britain's leading broadcasters, is a veteran foreign correspondent for the BBC, and co-author of *Many Reasons Why*, a documentary inquiry into the Viet Nam War (Scolar Press, 1978). His article in this issue is a greatly expanded version of the second part of *The Eagle and the Small Birds*, a documentary series (produced by David Morton) which he wrote and presented on BBC Radio 4 earlier this year. In 1981 (August, September, October) ENCOUNTER published the three parts of his "How (& Why) Britain Lost the Leadership of Europe", which is to appear in book form under the title *The Price of Victory* (BBC Publications).

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph*. *The Senate of Lilliput*, recently published by Faber, contains his lively sketches of House of Commons personalities.

D. J. Enright was Co-Editor of ENCOUNTER from 1970–72, when he joined the publishing firm of Chatto & Windus; he is Honorary Professor of English at The University of Warwick. His *Collected Poems* were published in 1981 by Oxford University Press, who earlier this year brought out his anthology, *The Oxford Book of Death*. A volume of his recent essays, *A Mania for Sentences*, will be published this summer by Chatto & Windus.

Malcolm Bradbury is Professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia. His novels include *Eating People is Wrong* (1959), *Stepping Westward* (1965), *The History Man* (1975), and *Rates of Exchange*, published this spring by Knopf (New York) and Secker & Warburg (London). In its January and February issues ENCOUNTER published excerpts from his latest work of literary criticism, *The Modern American Novel* (Oxford University Press).

Bernard Bergonzi. Professor of English at the University of Warwick, is the author, among other works, of *Reading the Thirties* (1978), *The Situation of the Novel* (1979), and *Heroes' Twilight* (1980), all published by Macmillan Press. His novel, *The Roman Persuasion*, was brought out in 1981 by Weidenfeld.

Laurence Lerner, Professor of English at the University of Sussex, is the author of *The Victorians* (Methuen, 1978), *Love and Marriage: Literature in its Social Context* (Edward Arnold, 1979), and *The Literary Imagination* (Harvester Press, 1982).

Clive Sinclair is the newly appointed literary editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, and the author of two volumes of short stories—*Hearts of Gold* (n.e. Penguin, 1979) and *Bedbugs*, published last year by Allison & Busby, who this spring published his study of *The Brothers Singer*.

WE VERY MUCH regret that there was a printer's error in Michael Charlton's article, "The Eagle & the Small Birds" in our June issue. On p. 10, 2nd column, line 14, should read: "It is the British position" (not "passion").

THE NEXT ISSUE

AS ANNOUNCED earlier, ENCOUNTER is now published ten times a year. The next issue,dated September-October, will appear on 5 September. From the November issue we shall revert to our normal publishing programme (i.e. the November issue will be published on 20 October).

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